BYRON

E. C. MAYNE

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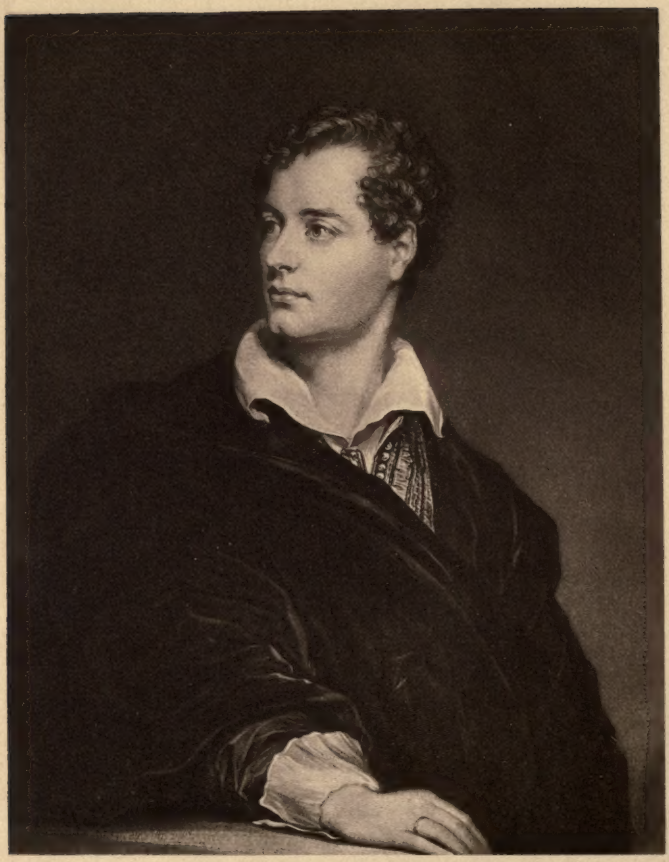

Byron.

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BYRON

BY

ETHEL COLBURN MAYNE

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WITH EIGHTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I WISH to give very grateful thanks to those who have helped me in my work, and to those who have, by their kindness, added a value to this book which it could not otherwise have boasted. Of the former, I am especially indebted to Mr. Roger Ingpen for the most generous of aid, and for the loan of many books. Of the latter, I would name particularly Mr. John Murray, who has allowed me to quote freely from his inestimable editions of the *Letters and Journals* by Mr. Rowland E. Prothero, and of the *Poems* by Mr. Ernest Hartley Coleridge, and has also permitted the use of several pictures; Mr. Horatio F. Brown, to whom I owe the reproduction of Ruckard's picture ("Byron in Venice"); and Mary, Countess of Lovelace, who, after my work was finished, read the proofs, and finding my view of the Separation-episode in agreement with her own and that of her family, accorded me the right of reproducing Hayter's miniature of Lady Byron. Lady Lovelace asks me to state, in this connection, that in the opinion of the family, the portrait by Ramsay, in vol. iv. of *Letters and Journals* (said to be that of Lady Byron), is not authentic.

Mr. Buxton Forman was kind enough to give his opinion against the authenticity of a picture which I had hoped might prove to be one of Allegra. It is therefore not included.

ETHEL COLBURN MAYNE

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INTRODUCTORY

THERE is only one full-length *Life and Letters* of Byron in English, and that was published in 1830. I imagine that this statement will astonish a good many people, for most of us have had —I certainly had—a vague impression that Lives of Byron were too numerous. Writings about Byron have been at times too numerous, it is true. In 1869–70, for example, periodical literature was infested by his name; but those writings were only in a very restricted sense biographical. Pathological would be their juster description, for they were concerned with what was called "the Beecher Stowe revelation", and the whirlwind of controversy to which they contributed raged round one point only. I hope it will be as pleasant a surprise to my readers as it was to myself to find how very little else we knew about Byron, and how enthrallingly interesting, from its beginning to its end, his story is. The first act of a drama is sometimes seen, as the action develops, to have been too powerful. It has tuned the mind for events which, in the actual happening, fail to fulfil such radiant or such sinister promise. We who watch the play called "Byron" need fear no like deception. The first act seizes us, but when we rouse ourselves to attention for the next, we find no element of excitement wanting, and the third and fourth keep us not less enthralled. There is hardly another life-drama of which

the same can be said. That one to which we turn as instinctively as he turned himself for a parallel—the life-drama of Napoleon—falls below Byron's by reason of the hero's sterility in defeat. The sick eagle of St. Helena, the sick eagle of Italy and Greece—which had the unconquerable mind? If we measure men by their reaction to misfortune, there can be little doubt of the answer.

Thus, like many another writer of many another nation, I (the countrywoman of Thomas Moore, his first biographer) "felt the call"—I longed to write a book about Byron. The coveted opportunity was afforded, and then for the first time realising the task which lay before me, I realised also for the first time the delight. If any degree of the joy I have felt in the work be transmitted to my readers, I shall count myself a fortunate woman. But perhaps I ought to apologise, as Byron's biographer, for being a woman at all. Assuredly *he* would have thought so. "You should recollect", he wrote of some critical severity on Lady Morgan, "that she is a woman; though, to be sure, they are now and then very provoking, still, as authoresses, they can do no great harm". The indulgence, scathing as it is, would not have been extended to her who dared to ply her pen on the subject of himself.

Much water has run, since Byron's day, under the bridge between authors and "authoresses"; it seemed high time that a woman should write of this "victim of her sex", as he loved to call himself. There might appear, were I to cite all the arguments in such a biographer's favour, something too much of that sex-vanity which many of us feel to be nowadays losing in subtlety of effect what it has gained in candour; and indeed I think that the extremely articulate method is here, as elsewhere, superfluous. Those who have not already

"the arguments" at their fingers' ends, will, I humbly hope, discover them as they read.

A word about the books on Byron.

Moore's *Life*, published in 1830, is the foundation-stone for all; and if we often wish that it had been more soundly laid, we nevertheless must recognise that it has enabled two structures of supreme value to be erected. I allude to the editions of the *Letters and Journals*, and of the *Poetry*, by Mr. Rowland E. Prothero and Mr. Ernest Hartley Coleridge, respectively. Both are published by Mr. John Murray. Praise of such works from me would be an absurdity: I offer my sincerest gratitude and admiration.

John Cordy Jeaffreson's book, *The Real Lord Byron* (1883), which is by way of being a "full-dress" biography, is, rather, a full-dress debate. All through it the author argues interminably against now an actual, now an imagined, opponent, and we rise from our perusal with brain battered and image shattered. Neither a "real" nor an unreal Byron emerges from these wordy pages, wherein there is an occasional shrewdness, an intermittent flash of insight, a love of truth that pulses, however, chiefly for the sake of defeating some one else's. Further, the book was written at a time when guesswork had to supply the place of knowledge, and Jeaffreson, like many another, guessed badly.

Of the late Lord Lovelace's *Astarte* (1905), the text of this book says enough. *Astarte* gives us vivid evocations of Lady Byron and Mrs. Leigh, and it has, besides, the supreme merit of unassailable documents—to a degree which makes the sole attempt at refutation a mere monument of absurdity. (See Appendix III.: Medora Leigh.)

These are the chief sources. Of the rest, I may

mention Galt's short *Life* (1830) and Lady Blessington's *Recollections* (1834). W. E. Henley's notes to the single volume of letters with which he dealt (1897) have been, I cannot but think, a little overpraised. His inaccuracies are flagrant; his devotion to the "prize-ring" aspect of society is exaggerated to a degree which destroys the values of his picture; while his animus against all the women concerned is so great as to make him a mere special pleader in the record of the Byronic basenesses.

Of Lord Broughton's *Recollections*, the value, less though it be than fond expectation had long looked forward to, is still considerable, especially as regards the highly controversial topic of the burnt Memoirs.

In writing of Byron, we write of quintessential humanity. "My pang shall find a voice": that cry in *Manfred* is the word, as it were, of his life; and he uttered it hardly more for himself than for us all. We need that utterance, for scarce one of us would have the honesty, had we the power, to crystallise our feelings into the phrases he has made for us. "Humour" we love to term our lesser form of self-consciousness, but Byron's self-consciousness was supreme, and towered high above the subterfuge of humour. Through its excess it became its own antithesis—it became unconscious. He "did not know when he was doing it". Each time we use that pedestrian saying, we define the last triumph of expression. Yes: the vanity of suffering, which every one possesses in a greater or less degree, Byron possessed in a degree which has made him mankind's most fearless mouthpiece—for courage also is needed for such spontaneity as his.

That he was, besides the Byron of Byronism, the Byron of whom his intimate friend could write (in a

travesty of one of his saddest poems) that "Momus himself never painted A livelier creature than thee", alters nothing in the case. The paradox was part of the pose, using "pose" in its true sense of "poise"—the way in which you have to stand if *you* are to stand at all. We hear too much of his "chameleon" character. His character was not chameleon, but strikingly the reverse. Byron never changed; in all surroundings he remained the same. "Everything that he did is implicit in everything else that he did": I have written that elsewhere of him, and it is, in truth, from his invariability that the whole Byronic legend has grown. So far from not being able to guess what he will do, we know on the instant what he will do, and—still more accurately—what he will say. We could not have imagined the words, but we can imagine the sense. Did he ever fail to say it? Not once. "My pang shall find a voice"—and it was always the same voice. The songs, with growing powers, became more complex; even as a De Reszke advances from singing scales to singing *Tristan*, so Byron advanced from the vibrant monotony of the early narratives to the vibrant variety of his World-poem. What is *Lara*, after all, but an inarticulate Juan? And in *Juan*, again, we find further proof of his invariability—for how persistently, in *Juan*, the imperishable boy that Byron was flames forth! Men are not so intoxicated with "knowing". Goethe perceived this puerile strain in him: "As soon as he reflects, he is a child" (*Sobald er reflectirt, ist er ein Kind*).

Thus, in the continual portrayal of himself, he was in reality portraying a recurrent aspect of young manhood. The mode, to be sure, is for the hour altered: young men nowadays are morbidly cheerful, amused as never children were by children's toys—and does not the much-paraded bloom seem often to be only painted on the

peach? Byron's pallor, Byron's wild-eyed woe, histrionic though they be, convince us of some profound, unseizable sincerity. The *sunt lacrimæ rerum* is somewhere therein affirmed—with all the crudeness of half-comprehension, it is true, yet with a quality in the utterance which persuades the soul. We believe in the Byronic youth from the bottom of our hearts, in short, simply because there never was such a youth, and (as Voltaire said of the Deity) it was necessary to invent him. And if ever, in such more abstract sense, the child was father of the man, Byron's "youth" was father of the wildfire Byron whose stone is not, and never will be, in Westminster Abbey; yet whose memory tingles so keenly through the veins of England that, forgotten as he is often said to be, there is rarely a day even now on which, in one connection or another, we do not find, as they found when he was alive, his name in the newspaper.

> "For I have that within me that shall tire
> Torture and Time, and breathe when I expire".

11 Holland Road, Kensington
April 22, 1912

BYRON

CHAPTER I

CHILDHOOD—1788-1798

Byron's forbears—"Foulweather Jack"—The "Wicked Lord"—Byron's father and mother—A miserable marriage—The heiress despoiled—Birth of Byron—His "only childism"—The twisted foot—Life in Aberdeen—Death of Captain Byron—Childish traits—First lessons—The Highlands—Mary Duff—Precocity in love—He succeeds to the title

WILDFIRE leaped about his cradle, as it were. Of a "dark and ominous type", says his German biographer, Karl Elze, were his immediate forbears. "Unbridled passions, defiant self-will, arrogant contempt for the accepted order of things, together with high endowments of energy—these made an inauspicious heritage"; and his grandfather, by marrying a Cornishwoman,[1] had added to the cup a superfluous infusion of the Celtic melancholy —as notorious in our own days as was the Byronic

[1] She was his first cousin as well. William, fourth Baron Byron, married Frances, second daughter of the fourth Baron Berkeley of Stratton, and had by her the two sons known as the "Wicked Lord" (William, fifth Baron) and "Foulweather Jack". Her sister married John Trevanion of Caerhayes, Cornwall, and had by her that daughter, Sophia, who, marrying "Foulweather Jack", became the mother of John Byron ("Mad Jack") and grandmother of the poet. To the Berkeley strain John Cordy Jeaffreson attributes "the impulsiveness and vehemence of Jack Byron and his son" (*The Real Lord Byron*, i. 28).

variety in those of which I am to write. The grandfather was that Admiral John Byron who was known to his companions in service by the nickname of Foulweather Jack, because he never could make a voyage without encountering a hurricane. From a word let fall by Mrs. Piozzi, who was an intimate friend of his wife, we gather that the Admiral made his hurricanes for himself when he was at home.[1] His first cousin, Sophia Trevanion, whom he married in 1748, gave him two sons and four daughters.[2] From the list of these, Juliana and John stand forth as the stormy petrels. Juliana qualified for the typical Byronic part by marriage with *her* first cousin, William Byron. This was violently opposed by his father, the legendary "Wicked Lord"—otherwise William, fifth Baron Byron, hero of the Chaworth Duel tragedy. His dislike to the union brought about the devastation of the family property from which it never, in the Byron days, wholly recovered; for this fifth lord was so infuriated by the marriage of his son with one thus near in blood that —very nearly insane as he was, and to such extent justified of his wrath against the Byronic tendency to in-breeding—he resolved to hand that heir a ruined heritage. The heritage was ruined, but the son never received it. He died before the father in 1788; and *his* son, too, died in 1794,[3] when our Byron

[1] Mrs. Piozzi wrote of Mrs. Byron, "She is wife to the Admiral, *pour ses péchés*" (*Life and Writings of Mrs. Piozzi*, ii. 456).

[2] They were: (1) John, eldest son; father of the poet. (2) George, who married Henrietta Dallas. Their son, George (R.N.), succeeded the poet in 1824 as seventh lord. (3) Frances, who married Colonel Charles Leigh. Their son, George, married his first cousin, Augusta Byron (Hon. Augusta Leigh), daughter of John Byron by his first marriage. (4) Juliana-Elizabeth, who married her first cousin, the Hon. William Byron, only son and heir of William, fifth lord, whom the poet (his grand-nephew) succeeded in 1798 —the son having died before his father. (5) Sophia-Mary, who died unmarried. (6) Charlotte-Augusta, who married Vice-Admiral Parker.

[3] This son was killed fighting at the siege of Calvi, in Corsica.

was six years old—leaving the child heir to the barony.

John, father of the poet, and elder son of Foulweather Jack, was the other stormy petrel. At twenty-two, a dazzlingly handsome and very dissipated Guardsman, he ran away with, and in a year married, the Marchioness of Carmarthen[1]—born Amelia d'Arcy, only child and heiress of the last Earl of Holderness, and, moreover, Baroness Conyers in her own right. They lived in France, and had three children, of whom only the last-born, Augusta, survived. This was the girl who, in 1807, married her first cousin, George Leigh, and thus became the Augusta Leigh whose name runs through the whole Byron story.

In 1784, the year after Augusta's birth, Lady Conyers[2] died, and Captain Byron returned to England, head over ears in debt, and avowedly on the look-out for what his son, in after years, was to describe as a "Golden Dolly". He found her quickly in Miss Catherine Gordon of Gight,[3] a direct descendant of the Royal House of Scotland—for Annabella Stewart, daughter of James I of Scotland, had married the

[1] Wife of Francis, Marquis of Carmarthen, afterwards fifth Duke of Leeds.

[2] Her death deprived her husband of £4000 a year. She is said to have died of grief caused by his vices and brutalities. This was strenuously denied by the poet in a letter written to a Swiss admirer in 1823. "So far from [my father's] being 'brutal', he was of an extremely amiable and joyous character, though careless and dissipated. . . . It is not by brutality that a young officer in the Guards seduces and carries off a Marchioness, and marries two heiresses". Elze pours contempt on this letter: "it is either self-delusion, or deliberate falsehood".

[3] She had a fortune of £23,000, "doubled by rumour" (*Dict. Nat. Biog.*). In 1784, the year of Lady Conyers' death, before Miss Gordon met Jack Byron, she saw, at Edinburgh, Mrs. Siddons act the character of Isabella in Southerne's *Fatal Marriage*, and was so overcome that she fell into convulsions and had to be carried out, uttering, with a loud cry—an exclamation belonging to the character acted by Mrs. Siddons—"Oh, my Biron, my Biron!" (Moore; 1838, p. 3).

second Earl of Huntley, and their third son became Sir William Gordon of Gight. The lairds of Gight were a "hot-headed, hasty-handed race, sufficiently notable to be commemorated by Thomas the Rhymer"; and Catherine's father, George Gordon, was the fifth who bore the two names which his grandson was to make immortal. He married one Catherine Innes of Rosieburn; the daughter was born in 1765, and was their only child. Both her parents died early, and she was brought up by her grandmother—a Duff of the Fife family—who lived at Banff, and was commonly called Lady Gight. This was a very parsimonious great lady, and an illiterate one as well; but, aware of the disadvantages of illiteracy, she was solicitous that the little girl should be better educated than herself. Her solicitude bore fruit. Catherine Gordon—destined to be the mother of a great poet—was all her life particularly fond of reading, and read good literature; she wrote vivid, though inelegant, letters; and she could criticise shrewdly, in after years, not only her son's poems (those which she saw, for she died before his notable works were published),[1] but the discrepant reviews of them. On the other hand, she never lost the provinciality, the uncouthness even, of the atmosphere wherein she had grown up, and to this defect was added the far more distressing one of a violent temper which had never known control, and which expressed itself not only in speech, but in all too appropriate action. China as well as "words" flew at her victims' heads; with fire-irons no less than with opprobrium were they pursued. . . . In this undisciplined personality an evident and

[1] With the exception of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. There is said to be in existence a book in which she collected all the criticisms of his early poems, and inserted on blank pages interleaved her own comments, which were written with wit and ability. The whereabouts of the volume is unknown (*Notes and Queries*, 4th series, December 1869, p. 495).

overweening pride of birth, justified though it was by facts, made a ludicrous impression. She seemed of the soil—nay, of the slums (had the word then been in vogue); yet in her the observer was enjoined to honour a "gentlewoman"!

It was in Catherine Gordon's twentieth year that, for her sins, she met and married John Byron. Bath was the scene of both events—Bath where, some years earlier, her father had drowned himself.[1] In a girl so superstitious as was the heiress of Gight, it seems a reckless ruffling of destiny to have fixed her wedding-day, in Bath, for *the thirteenth of May*. But that was what she did, that was how she "defied augury"—and all the world knows whether augury or she prevailed. The union was unimaginably wretched. She had been married for her money—as an anonymous Scottish rhymer had warned her on her wedding-day, in a ballad openly addressed to Miss Gordon of Gight; and her money was instantly snatched from her. In two years (1784–86) the heiress was landless and almost penni-

[1] "You know, or you do *not* know, that my maternal grandfather* (a very clever man, and amiable, I am told) was strongly suspected of suicide . . . and that another very near relative of the same branch took poison, and was merely saved by antidotes. For the first of these events there was no apparent cause, as he was rich, respected, and of considerable intellectual resources, hardly forty years of age, and not at all addicted to any unhinging vice. It was, however, but a strong suspicion, owing to . . his melancholy temper. *The second had* a cause, but it does not become me to touch upon it; it happened when I was far too young to be aware of it, and I never heard of it till after the death of that relative, many years afterwards. I think, then, that I may call this dejection *constitutional*. I had always been told that in *temper* I more resembled my maternal grandfather than any of my *father's* family—that is, in the gloomier part of his temper, for he was what you call a good-natured man, and I am not" (Letter to John Murray; Moore, ed. 1838, p. 531).

* Byron's grandfather, George Gordon, was found drowned in the canal at Bath in 1779. His great-grandfather, Alexander Davidson Gordon, was drowned in the Ythan, a river of Aberdeenshire, in 1760. In both cases there was suspicion of suicide.

less; she had nothing of her own in the world but a pittance of £150 a year.

> "When the heron leaves the tree
> The laird of Gight shall landless be".

So ran an old saw of the Gordons; and legend affirms that on that sinister Thirteenth of May the heronry of Gight flew over to Haddo, the property of the Earl of Aberdeen. Lord Haddo, the eldest son, on hearing it, said calmly: "The land will soon follow". . . . For a few months the Byron-Gordons (her husband assumed the name) lived at beautiful Gight. But quickly the truth came out. Captain Byron was assailed on every side by clamorous creditors; all available cash was engulfed, the timber on the estate was cut down, the farms, the salmon-fishery rights, were sold, £8000 was borrowed on mortgage. It was in vain. The debts were still but half paid. In 1786 the Byrons left Gight; in 1787 (almost unbelievable, were it not that such things seem constantly to happen) Lord Haddo bought the estate! The land had "followed".

> "Ye've married, ye've married wi' Johnny Byron,
> To squander the lands of Gight away":

the doggerel must have jingled in Catherine Gordon's ears, but "Johnny Byron" was still enthroned in her heart. "*His foibles—they deserve no worse name*": thus she wrote, after his death, of the courses which had disinherited her house, and indeed this wife, who could storm the roof off for a whimsy, bore her financial ruin with dignity and composure. The purchase-money of Gight was thrown, after the rest, into the abyss of her husband's debts; but Catherine could live on her pittance of £150 a year without incurring any. At first it was in France, with him; then at the end of 1787, returning alone to England, she soon afterwards—on

January 22, 1788—gave birth, at 16 Holles Street, London,[1] to her first and only child, George Gordon Byron.

He was born with a caul. The fabled talisman against drowning was sold by his nurse to one Captain Hanson, brother of Mrs. Byron's family lawyer, John Hanson; and two years after buying it, Captain Hanson was drowned. It is strange that Byron should never have commented on this little irony, and the more so because tragedies of drowning entered with unusual frequency into the story of his life. He had much to say, on the other hand, of the two remaining peculiarities of his birth: his "only childism", and his twisted foot. Of the former, he made a subject for vanity. "I have been thinking", he says in his *Detached Thoughts*,[2] "of an odd circumstance. My daughter, wife, half-sister,[3] mother, sister's mother, natural daughter, and myself, are or were all *only* children. . . . Such a complication of *only* children, all tending to *one* family, is singular enough, and looks like fatality almost. But the fiercest animals have the fewest numbers in their litters". Not many passages of his characteristic prose are more characteristic than this one, wherein his constant brooding over the family history is mingled with the special form to which his vanity tended. He would be exceptional at any cost, fierce at any cost: thus horses (the "one-litter" animal *par excellence*) are omitted from a list in which "lions, tigers, and even elephants, which are mild in comparison", are eagerly displayed. Horses, though spirited, are not "fierce"—and horses are ignored.

[1] Since numbered 24, and now destroyed.

[2] Prothero, *Letters and Journals*, v. 467.

[3] In this instance he "thought" erroneously. Augusta Leigh was not an only child, except in the sense that the two other children of John Byron's first marriage died before her birth.

Of the other circumstance—the twisted foot—vanity possessed itself also, but this time with a morbid intensity which turned it into one of the keynotes of his life. It is as well one of the puzzles of his story. Inured as the student of biography must needs become to conflicting evidence, the discrepancies here afford a fresh amazement. Of all things, *this*—a question of visible and tactual fact—would seem the easiest to establish; yet even in the Byron legend no point is more debated. I shall not summon the cloud of witnesses, for they witness only to the enigma; what this one positively affirms, that one as positively contradicts; what the lasts on which his shoes were made[1] would seem to prove—that both feet were perfect—is powerless to convince when set against the observation of all who knew him, and the (perhaps less cogent) testimony of his own incessant mental suffering. . . . From the maze, one certainty alone emerges. The foot was not a club-foot. But he, in the histrionic heats of his imagination, fanned as they were by the continuous actual drama which his (in all other respects) surpassing personal beauty kept ablaze—he would be satisfied, so to speak, with nothing less than the worst, the ugliest aspect. *He had a club-foot:* only the "big word" would do, and it must be in the biggest letters, and the limelight must illume them. It is not difficult to understand. Dowered as he was with almost everything else that the fairies can bring to the christening, this was, as Macaulay said, the bad fairy's bundle. She flung it into his cradle, and she flung a curse with it: he was to attribute it to his mother. The allusion (made by himself) to that mother's "false modesty" remains obscure, but we can conjecture its meaning; and his persuasion of its truth embittered hopelessly a relationship which nothing could have

[1] Preserved in Nottingham Museum.

made an even tolerable one. We shall learn later what his life with her contained of mental torture—and we shall not forget, while learning it, that her offences against him dated, as he came to believe, from before his conscious existence. Once, in a fit of her unhappy fury, she called him a lame brat. He answered, "I was born so, mother"; and the boyish face was white with such anguish as permits no further analysis. . . . Words! No blows have ever shown men hell as words can show it.

When the little boy was two years old, Mrs. Byron left London for Aberdeen, where her husband joined her. They lived together for a short time in lodgings in Queen Street, but domesticity with this latter-day Catherine the Curst was out of the question. Jack Byron—then safely self-exiled in Valenciennes—wrote of her in 1791 to his sister, Mrs. Charles Leigh, with whom he corresponded: "She is very amiable at a distance; but I defy you and all the Apostles to live with her two months, for if anybody could live with her, it was me." Nor had *he* given it up without a fair trial. If they could by no means agree in the same house, perhaps they might contrive to do so, if it were only in the same street. So the lady "flitted" to the farther end of Queen Street, bearing all expenses of the move herself; and they visited one another, drank tea with one another—but even this soon proved to be more than could be tranquilly got through, and they agreed to meet not at all. Captain Byron still lingered a while in Aberdeen—his wife occasionally possessed small sums of ready money which could be wrested from her by letter—and in his walks he often met the little son, out for an airing with his nurse. The father would stop and chat with his offspring, and at last he expressed a wish to have the child on a couple of days' visit. Mrs. Byron

demurred, but the nurse declared that if his father kept the boy *one* night, he would certainly not keep him another. Her presage was fulfilled. When she went next morning to inquire about her charge, Captain Byron earnestly requested her to take him home at once. Moore pleads for his darling that since the nurse (Mrs. Byron having only that one servant) could not stay with him, the little boy was naturally disconcerted, and hence "naughty." No doubt of it; and a still more forcible defence should occur to any one who has ever beheld a man (and a fashionable and dissipated young man at that) helpless before the indomitable will of a child of two years old—to say nothing of its complicated toilet and feeding arrangements.

After this exploit, Jack Byron, probably feeling that he had done all that could be required of him, fled to France, and lived at Valenciennes on his wife's money, until he died in the summer of the following year (1791), aged only thirty-six.

Little though the visit to his father may prove concerning the character of the small "Geordie" (as our poet was called during his Scottish period), there can be no question that he inherited the passionate temper which came to him, as it were, from every side. He was once scolded for having soiled a new frock in which he had just been dressed. The tiny creature, in speechless resentment ("one of my silent rages"), seized the frock in both hands and tore it from top to bottom. He had many times seen his mother do the same with her gowns and caps; but we must hope that he had not seen her commit the further delinquency which a relic, treasured in Aberdeen, was still attesting when Moore published his biography in 1830. This was a china saucer, out of which, in another "silent rage", the baby Byron had bitten a large piece.

In such manner was the stage set for his existence with his mother. That rent gown and bitten saucer were sufficiently significant properties, and the drama proceeded in their sense. What was there not to intensify it! There was soon even aggravated poverty. While Jack Byron lived, his wife had been obliged to pay all his expenses; and now that he was dead—now that her characteristic shrieks of grief at that news (they had been heard all over the street) had sunk into silence—the woman who had been the victim of those foibles which deserved "no worse name", found herself heavily involved in debt. For since he to the last had snatched all such ready money as she might have painfully saved out of her very hands, she was forced to procure on credit the furnishing for the flat to which she moved after his death. This was in Broad Street; her expenses in connection with it, joined to the continuous drain that had gone on in the past, now loaded her down with a debt of £300.[1] She was a woman who worried herself vehemently over money-matters; and the incessant strain of grinding penury exacerbated all her natural feelings. Catherine the Curst may claim, in the early days of her motherhood at any rate, some sympathy. An heretofore considerable heiress, totally despoiled, living in a scrubby flat in a depressing northern town, cuts a deplorable figure enough, though she be of docile temper; what the ordeal must have been to this one, fancy hesitates to grasp. She was only twenty-seven years old; she had been, besides a notable heiress, a vain, capricious girl, "as proud as Lucifer": now here she

[1] The payment of interest on this debt and of her grandmother's annuity reduced her annual income to £135. On such a sum, however, she contrived to live without increasing her obligations, and on the death of her grandmother she discharged them all.

was, a disclassed, unfriended widow, beggared to such a degree that she saw herself obliged to send her spirited and sensitive child to a cheap and nasty day-school in the Long Acre of Aberdeen!

Day-schools, one gathers, were always nasty in those days, and this one was abnormally cheap—only five shillings a quarter. Learning, even of the simplest kind, can hardly have been looked for at the price, and Byron himself has told us how much the year of his attendance taught him: "not even my letters". When his mother found this out, she first soundly boxed his ears, and then got a private tutor for him, "a very devout, clever little clergyman, named Ross". Under Ross the boy discovered the passionate delight in historical reading which remained with him to the end. Next came Paterson, the "very serious, saturnine, but kind young man, the son of my shoemaker"—who was nevertheless a good scholar, and initiated him into Latin. From Paterson's hands he passed into the Aberdeen Grammar School, where he remained till he was ten years old.

In 1796, after an attack of scarlet fever, Mrs. Byron took him to the Highlands, and either in that year or the following one they lived at a farmhouse near Ballater. "From this period", he wrote long afterwards, "I date my love of mountainous countries". . . . It is said that our earliest clear memory of anything in Nature is always connected with that aspect which in later life is to prove the nearest to our hearts. Byron's joy was tardy in arrival: he was eight years old before he ever saw a mountain; but the first vision was remembered as only the destined vision is—and, to account for its immanent vividity, we need no thin-spun theorising (such as Moore and Christopher North resort to) but merely the knowledge that these are something more than revocations, and shine for their possessors in the

light that never was on sea or land. Such to me is my first outdoor memory—and each will find, on reflection, that the First-Remembered is, as well, the heart of all dreaming.

In Byron's boyish volume there are two poems relating to the Highland sojourn.[1] Of the first, the subject is the mountain of Loch-na-gar (or Lachin-y-gair) near Invercauld; one Mary—"sweet Mary" with "the long flowing ringlets of gold"—is the inspiration of the second. "Byron", says Mr. E. H. Coleridge, "was in early youth 'unco' wastefu'' of Marys". Between the ages of eight and ten we find two—this evanescent Highland nymph,[2] and the dark-haired, hazel-eyed little cousin and beauty, whose "very dress" he remembered sixteen years later when, in 1813, he wrote the famous passage in his journal for November 26: "I have been thinking a good deal lately of Mary Duff".

Precocity in love is not uncommon among ordinary mortals, though Alfieri considered such youthful sensibility to be an unerring sign of the artistic soul. He himself fell in love at nine years old; Dante is so conspicuous an instance as hardly to permit of citation; Heine, at eleven, began his career of passion with the idyll of Little Veronica. Like Byron, Heine never forgot his childish love; but, unlike Byron, he beheld her die while she was still a child. Hazel-eyed Mary Duff married, at eighteen, an eminent wine-

[1] See also the famous lines in *The Island*:

> "The infant rapture still survived the boy,
> And Loch-na-gar with Ida looked o'er Troy".
>
> (*Poems*, 1903, v. 609)

[2] This is the "Highland Mary" of local tradition. She was the daughter of James Robertson, a farmer of Deeside, and was of gentle birth through her mother—tracing her descent, indeed, to Macdonald, the Lord of the Isles. "She died at Aberdeen, in 1867, aged eighty-five" (*Poems*, i. 192).

merchant;[1] and it is Byron's narrative of his reception of that news which makes the episode so singularly differ from other records of precocious passion. When he was sixteen (1804) his mother one day told him that she had had a letter from Edinburgh saying that his old sweetheart, Mary Duff, was married. "And what was my answer? I really cannot explain or account for my feelings at that moment; but they nearly threw me into convulsions, and alarmed my mother so much that, after I grew better, she generally avoided the subject—to *me*—and contented herself with telling all her acquaintance. . . . We were both the merest children. I had and have been attached fifty times since that period; yet I recollect all we said to each other, all our caresses, her features, my restlessness, sleeplessness, my tormenting my mother's maid to write for me to her, which she at last did, to quiet me. . . . I remember, too, our walks, and the happiness of sitting by Mary, in the children's apartment, at their house not far from the Plain-stones at Aberdeen, while her lesser sister Helen played with the doll, and we sat gravely making love, in our way.

"How the deuce did all this occur so early? where could it originate? I certainly had no sexual ideas for years afterwards; and yet my misery, my love for that girl were so violent that I sometimes doubt if I have ever been really attached since. . . . Hearing of her marriage . . . was like a thunder-stroke — it nearly choked me—to the horror of my mother and the astonishment and almost incredulity of everybody. . . . How very pretty is the perfect image of her in my memory—her brown, dark hair, and hazel eyes; her very dress! I should be quite grieved to see *her now*;

[1] Mr. Robert Cockburn, of Edinburgh and London. There is a long reference to Mary Duff in Ruskin's *Præterita*, i. 169.

the reality, however beautiful, would destroy, or at least confuse, the features of the lovely Peri which then existed in her, and still lives in my imagination, at the distance of more than sixteen years".

Again, in 1815, writing to one Mrs. Hay, a cousin of Mary, he says, "I never forgot her, and never can. . . . I have the most perfect idea of her as a child"; and a year later Major Pryse Lockhart Gordon heard the same confidence. "We met at the dancing-school",[1] added Byron—and most of us have pirouetted through a similar idyll!

What the episode demonstrates, then, is not so much unusual precocity of feeling, as unusual violence in the expression of that instinctive masculine egotism which revolts at the capture by another of the once desired woman. Most boys of sixteen would have felt and looked for the moment mortified; Byron was "thrown nearly into convulsions". His sensibility was at any time excessive; we shall see that, at this time, he was in the throes of Mary Chaworth's rejection of him for John Musters. Now here was another beloved Mary, and another proof that he could be forgotten. With remembrance of our own young vanities and their frequent wounds, even feminine readers will refuse to wonder with him (and many of his biographers) over the intensity of his childish love. Not *that* was wonderful—but the intensity of his vanity, and of his generic masculine egotism.

In 1794 he had become heir to the title. In May 1798, his grand-uncle died at Newstead Abbey, and he became George Gordon, sixth Lord Byron.

[1] P. L. Gordon, *Personal Memoirs*, ii. 321–22.

CHAPTER II

EARLY BOYHOOD—1798–1801

The Chaworth Duel—Byron's inheritance—Rochdale and Newstead Abbey—Arrival at Newstead—May Gray—Nottingham: Lavender and Rogers—Move to London—Care of the twisted foot—Dr. Glennie of Dulwich—Mrs. Byron's character—The "first dash into poetry"—Margaret Parker

HE ran up to his mother on the day after his accession to the peerage and asked her if she saw any difference in him since he had been made a lord, for he could see none himself. But he was soon to feel acutely one difference. On the morning that his name was first called at the Grammar School with the title of *dominus* attached, he found himself so pierced by emotion as to be unable to give the "adsum". The round-eyed amazement of his schoolfellows added to the drama; speechless still, the small Baron at last burst into tears. In its intensity, and its departure from the national ideal in such matters, this (like many other things that he did) is a complete epitome of his relations with "the world".

No communication of any kind had been held with the former lord, who on the few occasions of mentioning his heir at all would speak of him as "the little boy at Aberdeen". Acquaintance with William, fifth Baron Byron, would, however, have afforded scant enjoyment to any one. He had lived under a cloud since the

notorious Chaworth Duel in 1765; and the cloud was not only black, but charged with the lightning of every kind of scandal. His wife[1] had been unable to live with him; and however exaggerated the tales of his brutalities to her (they were still current in the neighbourhood in 1830) there must have been some foundation of misery on which to build them. "He had thrown her into the pond at Newstead"; "he had shot his coachman in a fit of fury, flung the body into the carriage where his wife sat alone; then had mounted the box and driven her for miles through the darkness in that companionship". These things are not to be believed; but about what type of man are they invented? Something gives rise to the fell imaginings; it may be excusable when all is known; but it is there. The "Calumniated Angel" is a myth.

The Chaworth Duel had been more or less forced upon him. Mr. Chaworth[2] was a fire-eater; and the subject of their quarrel was one which has ever, in the hearts of country gentlemen, aroused strong passions—namely, the preservation of game. Chaworth was of the most stringent severity for poachers; Lord Byron (very characteristically) maintained that the way to have game was not to preserve at all. It came to a wager; Chaworth declared that he had more birds on five acres than his neighbour on all his estates, and Lord Byron proposed a bet of one hundred guineas. A third person intervened: "such a bet could never be decided"; and the conversation seemed to diverge. But Chaworth

[1] She was the daughter and heiress of Mr. Charles Shaw, of Besthorpe Hall, Norfolk. She married him in 1747, and died in 1788, the year of our Byron's birth.

[2] He was the great-grandson of George Chaworth, created (1627) Viscount Chaworth of Armagh, whose daughter Elizabeth married William, third Lord Byron, grandfather of the Wicked Lord. See note at end of chapter with reference to the Duel.

soon broke out again, and this time, instead of a wager, it was a challenge. He then left the room much excited. "Had he been hasty?" he demanded of a friend, and seemed uneasy; but Lord Byron had followed. The angry men ordered a waiter—the quarrel took place[1] on the occasion of the Notts Club Dinner at the Star and Garter Tavern, Pall Mall—to show them to an empty room. He did so, and placed on the table one small tallow candle. By this light they fought, with swords. In a few minutes the bell rang; the waiter entered, and found Mr. Chaworth supported in Lord Byron's arms, and mortally wounded. Chaworth had made the first pass, through his opponent's waistcoat, and thought he had killed *him*; but while he was asking the peer if he were in truth so sorely hurt, "Lord Byron shortened his sword, and stabbed him in the belly". Chaworth was carried to his own house, where he died, lamenting his folly in fighting in the dark, for that was what had led to his mistake: his sword, instead of being in Lord Byron's breast, had been merely entangled in the waistcoat. Lord Byron was tried by his peers at Westminster Hall in April of the same year, and found guilty of manslaughter;[2] but by an old statute ordaining that "in all cases where clergy are allowed, a Peer is to be dismissed without burning in the hand, loss of inheritance, or corruption of blood", this Peer escaped all punishment, and was immediately dismissed "on paying his fees".

Such is one version of the famous Chaworth Duel, over which the slayer's grand-nephew was to ponder so moodily when, in process of time, he fell in love with the victim's grand-niece.

[1] On January 26, 1765.

[2] The coroner's jury had given a verdict of "wilful murder". Lord Byron was consequently imprisoned in the Tower.

William, fifth lord, called by the country-folk The Wicked, lived thenceforth in utter seclusion for twenty-four years.[1] He always went armed; and when, by a particular exception, an old friend once dined with him, a case of pistols was placed on the table, as if it were part of the dinner-service and as probably to be used. He kept but two servants: old Joe Murray, afterwards to be the favourite of our sixth lord; and a woman who was dubbed by the neighbourhood "Lady Betty"—a nickname obvious in its implication. The only other inmates of Newstead Abbey were a colony of crickets, which he spent much time in feeding and training. They did come to know his voice, and would even obey his call; and our Byron used to relate, on the authority of Joe Murray and "Lady Betty", that on the day of the fifth lord's death the crickets left the house in a body and in such numbers that "you could not cross the hall without treading on them".

To such a being did the boy succeed—and to what inheritance? To an inheritance which had been deliberately ruined for revenge upon an only son. The grounds and house of Newstead had been allowed to fall into helpless decay; five thousand pounds' worth of oaks[2] had been cut down (for the old lord, despite his sordid way of life, had the family knack of impecuniosity); worst of all, the Lancashire estate of Rochdale had been sold—and sold illegally, both sellers and buyers being perfectly aware of the inability to make

[1] "When compelled by business to go to London, he travelled as Mr. Waters" (Dallas, *Recollections*, etc., 1824).

[2] One splendid oak, known as the "Pilgrim's", which stood and stands near the north lodge of the park, was bought in by the neighbouring gentry and made over to the estate. "Perhaps" (says Mr. E. H. Coleridge, *Poems*, vi. 497) "by the Druid oak [in *Don Juan*, xiii. 56] Byron meant to celebrate this 'last of the clan', which, in his day, before the woods were replanted, must have stood out in solitary grandeur".

out a title. But Lord Byron did not care, and the purchasers shrewdly calculated that by the time the tort could be set aside, they would have indemnified themselves for any pecuniary loss which their dispossession might then bring about.[1] For Rochdale was very rich in coal. Legal proceedings to recover the estate were begun by Byron's advisers in 1805. It may be said at once that the delays were so interminable—fresh points arising at every stage—that he found himself obliged to sell Newstead long before he regained Rochdale, which, according to his solicitor and agent, John Hanson, was "worth three Newsteads." How harassing these postponements were can best be displayed by passages from his many adjurations to that agent, whose probity was only equalled by his dilatoriness. One letter bears date July 19, 1814. "Pray think of Rochdale; it is the delay which drives me mad. I declare to God, I would rather have but ten thousand pounds clear and out of debt, than drag on the cursed existence of expectation and disappointment which I have endured for the last six years, for six months longer, though a million came at the end of them". And again, in a letter to John Murray, referring to Hanson, and dated August 21, 1817, he wrote: "The devil take everybody: I never can get any person to be explicit about anything or anybody, and my whole life is passed in conjectures of what people mean".

[1] The Rochdale estate had been in the Byron family since the time of Edward I. When Sir John Byron was, under Charles I (1643), raised to the peerage, he was entitled Baron Byron of Rochdale in the county of Lancaster. He had been a devoted partisan of the King: "Sir John Biron", says the writer of Colonel Hutchinson's Memoirs, " . . . and all his brothers, bred up in arms, and valiant men in their own persons, were all passionately the King's". Seven brothers of the family, indeed, had fought at Edgehill. Newstead was besieged by the Parliamentarians; at Charles I's death, the Parliament sequestered the Byron estates, but they were restored immediately on the accession of Charles II.

In 1823, the year before his death, having at last regained the estate, he sold it to Mr. James Dearden —with whom he had been in litigation all along, for Dearden was the lessee of the coal-pits—for thirty-four thousand pounds, "a very low price", as the *Blackburn Mail* for March 10, 1824, commented. The money was devoted to the Greek cause.

So much for one inheritance. And what of Newstead, the inheritance of the heart, so to speak, as Rochdale should have been of the pocket? Newstead Abbey, Notts, in the heart of the Sherwood Forest, the "Robin Hood" country,[1] had been with the Byrons since the time of Henry VIII. The priory had been founded and dedicated to God and the Virgin by Henry II, in expiation for the murder of Thomas à Becket, and its monks were of the order of St. Augustine.[2] They surrendered in July 1539, the thirty-first year of Henry VIII's reign; and in May 1540, the King granted Newstead and all its appurtenances to Sir John Byron, "little Sir John with the Great Beard". Sir John made it into a "castellated dwelling", and preferred it to the Lancashire house. Horace Walpole visited Newstead in 1760 (during the less

[1] About five miles south-west of Mansfield, "whose size, antiquity, and ancient privileges make it the capital of the Forest".

[2] They appear to have been high in the Royal favour, no less in spiritual than in temporal concerns. In the fifth lord's lifetime there was found in the lake at Newstead a large brass eagle, in the body of which was discovered a secret aperture, containing many legal deeds of rights and privileges. One was a grant of full pardon by Henry V for every possible crime (and there is added a long catalogue of such) which the monks might have committed previous to the 8th of December preceding! At the sale of the old lord's effects in 1776–77, this eagle, together with three candelabra found at the same time, was purchased by a watchmaker of Nottingham, and passed from his hands into those of Sir Richard Kaye, who was a prebendary of Southwell Minster. It now serves as a lectern in that church.

their part; but who shall name the agent for the rest of that fulfilment?

In the late summer of 1798, Mrs. Byron and her son left Aberdeen for Newstead. So ended the Scottish sojourn, which was never repeated,—though he kept alive to the last an affection for the Auld Lang Syne of it all. The first tour in Greece "carried me back to Morven";[1] and in the second expedition (says Moore) the dress chiefly worn at Cephalonia included a jacket of the Gordon tartan.[2] But what of the other association which Scotland came to have for him—what of the *Edinburgh Review*? Can we doubt, on even slender knowledge of him, that during that turmoil Scotland became the very Hades? A girl, at the time of the notorious article, happened to observe that she thought he had a slight Scotch accent. "Good God!" he cried, on hearing of it, "I hope not. I would rather the d——d country was sunk in the sea. *I*, the Scotch accent!"

"He passed", said a writer in the *Quarterly Review* for 1831, "as at the changing of a theatrical scene . . . from a shabby Scotch flat to a palace". Well, if not to a palace, at least to something almost as fairy-tale-like in its difference from that abode whose furnishing, when sold on their departure, fetched £74. 7s. 7d.! At the Newstead toll-house, Mrs. Byron, savouring the drama of the moment, asked the woman in charge "to whom these woods might belong?"

"The owner, Lord Byron, has been dead some weeks".

"And who is the next heir?"

"They say it is a little boy who lives at Aberdeen".

[1] A lofty mountain in Aberdeenshire.

[2] And see the famous *Don Juan* stanza (x. 18).

"And here he is, bless him!" broke in the nurse —that "May Gray" around whom Moore hangs a garland of pathos, and whom John Hanson (in a letter to Mrs. Byron of September 1, 1799)[1] despoils of it with blunt and all too convincing hand. Let us compare the accounts, for this child's childhood is of poignant interest. If his nurse were really "another mother" to him, no overcharged fiction of young mental suffering surpasses his reality. "Such is his dread of the woman that I really believe he would forego the satisfaction of seeing you if he thought he was to meet her again. He told me that she was perpetually beating him . . . that she brought all sorts of company of the very lowest description into his apartments; that she was out late at nights, and he was frequently left to put himself to bed; that she would take the Chaise-boys into the Chaise with her, and stopped at every little Ale-house to drink with them"; and Hanson adds that her conduct towards the boy was so shocking that it was the general topic of conversation among "dispassionate persons" at Nottingham.

When we examine Moore's garland in connection with this unmistakably truthful tale, we find him, perhaps, at nothing worse than his darling trick of the *suppressio veri*. In the very early days (he tells us), "she gained an influence over the boy's mind against which he rarely rebelled"—and this will, to the reader enlightened by Hanson, seem a not wholly ingenuous statement of the possible case. Again, when putting on the appliances which the little twisted limb required, the woman "would . . . teach him to repeat the first and twenty-third Psalms". Such teachings may be, have often been, associated with personal cruelties; and we read elsewhere that in the Aberdeen

[1] *Letters and Journals*, i. 10.

days, after the first and twenty-third Psalms had been duly repeated, the woman, leaving the child alone in that darkness which is so easily filled with every chosen horror of the mind, would slip out to her lover, while "Geordie", who was persuaded that the house was haunted, would get out of bed and run along the lobby till he saw a light, there to stand until he got so cold that he was obliged to go back to the warmth of the dreaded bedroom. And of course, in the mysterious and pathetic secrecy of babyhood, he never spoke of all this suffering to his mother until after May Gray had left them. Moore's wreath was twined of flowers supplied by herself to the doctor who attended her when she died in 1827—three years after the death in Greece. Dr. Ewing of Aberdeen was an ardent admirer of Byron, whose name just then was haloed like a saint's. May Gray would perhaps hardly have been human if she had not enskied herself. The doctor may be excused for his credulity, and all the more because she could show him keepsakes given her by the boy when she left Mrs. Byron's service in 1799, a date coinciding too well with Hanson's accusatory letter. The keepsakes were a watch—the first that he had ever possessed—and a full-length miniature of himself, painted by Kay of Edinburgh in 1795 (when he was six years old), which shows him with a bow and arrows in his hand, and long, curly hair falling over his shoulders. Both these treasures were given by May Gray's husband, after her death, to Dr. Ewing.

Thus stands the case for and against the nurse: and unfortunately Moore is a witness too often convicted of amiable evasions for us to take his word against the damning bluntness of the Hanson letter. I fear that the garland must be scattered, and a new pang added to the heartache with which we ponder on Byron's childhood.

They did not live at Newstead Abbey. Inured though Mrs. Byron was to poverty and hardship, the unspeakable desolation wrought by the fifth lord was more than she could face. Nottingham was chosen for their first home in the neighbourhood; and there, in the hope of curing his lameness, the boy was placed in the hands of a man named Lavender, "trussmaker to the General Hospital". Again the doom! Assuredly it seems that this child was singled out for misery. Lavender was the merest quack, and the merest brute as well, if we are to believe the earnest and reiterated testimony of a writer in *Notes and Queries*, who says that when the boy was *living*[1] with him (and undergoing tortures from the maltreatment of the defective limb) "he was frequently sent across the street for Lavender's beer".[2] The method adopted for the "cure" was to rub the foot with oil, then forcibly twist it round and screw it up in a wooden machine. This caused frightful suffering, visible to any one present, despite the bravery with which the boy endured it. Byron's teacher at this time was one Dummer Rogers,[3] who read Latin with him; and Rogers one day broke out in urgent sympathy. . . . "Such pain as I *know* you must be suffering, my Lord!" "Never mind, Mr. Rogers", said the boy. "You shall not see any signs of it in *me*". He was fond of the kindly man; and

[1] The "living" must have been during temporary absences of Mrs. Byron (that these took place is attested by Hanson's letter about May Gray), and the abode was at a Mrs. Giles's, in St. James's Lane (*Notes and Queries*, 4th series, iii. 284, 418, 561). The writer signed himself "Ellcee".

[2] "Lord Byron going to fetch a tankard of ale with one of Lavender's sixpences" was, says "Ellcee", one of the familiar sights of the locality. Lavender was what was termed a *sixpence-maker*. "Whenever he met with a pretty good half-crown, he would hammer it out to make six sixpences from it" (*Notes and Queries*, 4th series, iii. 284).

[3] Rogers was an American Loyalist who was pensioned by the English Government. He lived at Hen Cross, Nottingham.

many years afterwards, when in the neighbourhood of Nottingham, sent him a message to say that he could still recite some lines of Virgil which he had read during the period of Lavender's torture. For the latter he had a burning contempt. One day he scribbled all the letters of the alphabet on a sheet of paper, combined them anyhow into words and sentences, and asked Lavender what language that was.

"Italian", pronounced he—for he never could own to any ignorance; and the boy burst into a shout of rapturous laughter.

Mrs. Byron was soon shown that Lavender's "cure" was merely the infliction of useless torture, and she then took her son to London to consult the renowned Dr. Baillie—brother of the still more renowned Joanna Baillie. She left Nottingham in the summer of 1799, and took a house in Sloane Terrace. From that time until the end of 1802 Byron was attended by Dr. Baillie, in consultation with Dr. Laurie, of 2 St. Bartholomew's Close, and special boots were made for him by an expert named Sheldrake, in the Strand.[1] No cure was effected, and judging by Laurie's letters to Mrs. Byron, it is not astonishing that the foot remained as it was. "I much fear his Extreme Inattention will counteract every exertion on my part to make him better"; "I cannot help lamenting he has so little sense of the Benefit he has already received as to be so apparently neglectful"—for in the second letter, written on October 2, 1802, Laurie had to complain that the boy (who was then at Harrow) had spent several days in London without seeing him. This was the last attempt made at a cure;

[1] In *The Lancet* for 1827–28 (ii. 779) Mr. T. Sheldrake describes "Lord Byron's case", giving an illustration of the foot. But his account is as discrepant with the rest as they all are with each other. For a résumé of the opinions see *Letters and Journals*, i. 11–12.

but Sheldrake, in later years, contrived a sort of shoe which did away with the worst inconveniences.

While the two surgeons were tending the foot, Dr. Glennie, of Dulwich, was doing his best to develop the head. In the Lordship Lane of that pretty suburb stood the private school of this first "serious" teacher of Byron, who was to be the first also to form any well-considered view of his character. But Glennie was in addition to learn the full force of Mrs. Byron's. Everything that he thought desirable she opposed; she interfered with his instruction, and when the master tried to stop the foolish system of Saturday-to-Monday sojourns in London, Mrs. Byron retorted by making them into weeks instead of "week-ends". With any tolerable opportunity, Glennie could have done much; as things were, he could do almost nothing. Nor did even the injunctions of Lord Carlisle,[1] the boy's guardian, avail to influence Mrs. Byron. To every remonstrance from the master she would reply by one of her "paroxysms of passion", and these, unlike her son's rages, were audible over the whole school. Glennie overheard one day a painful morsel of dialogue. One of the boy's companions bluntly came out with: "Byron, your mother is a fool". "I know it", he answered gloomily, *not* knowing to what a degree the worse than folly was to injure him in later life. For Lord Carlisle was soon irretrievably alienated. He ceased to have any intercourse with his ward's mother, and when Glennie once again implored his intervention, he replied, "I can have nothing more to do with Mrs. Byron. You must manage her as you can". No one had ever succeeded in managing her, and Glennie failed with the rest. . . . Natures like hers make the constant

[1] He was the son of Isabella Byron, daughter of the fourth Lord Byron, by her marriage with the fourth Earl of Carlisle.

problem of the observer. She had a warm heart, courage, generosity, some shrewdness, and a crazy kind of devotion. Yet she made the mere misery, and might easily have made the ruin, of her only child. What practical care, after all, had she ever given him? None in his babyhood: where was the mother on all those haunted nights in Aberdeen? None, or far too little, in his physical distress, or Lavender's peer beer-boy could not have been the common gapeseed of St. James's Lane in Nottingham. None, and worse than none, in his first really vital contact with the outer world, or Glennie would have been permitted to do what he could, and the guardian, influential and prepared at least for duty-kindness, would not have been fatally estranged. It would have been better for Byron, as Elze comments, to be a "double" orphan. No relative could have proved a more infelicitous guardian than his mother proved. Her sudden gusts of maudlin tenderness (in which his eyes were pronounced to be "as beautiful as his father's") became, we may well suppose, as abhorrent as her gusts of loud-mouthed fury—and yet the boy was warm-hearted, generous, kind. As he grew up, he was forced into deception that she might not haunt and disgrace him; he wrote to her, when he did write (but indeed it is remarkable how dutiful he was in that respect), with frequent cold rejection of advances which would end, as he knew, in only one way. His deep and bitter suffering shows itself in various forms throughout his letters to the one woman who did, for a time, retain him by the proverbial "silken thread"—his half-sister, Augusta Leigh, then Augusta Byron. But what profound, what inexpressive, anguish lay beneath the brilliant mockery, and the stinging satire, and the outraged accusations of destiny, only those whose experience has been similar can in any degree

compute. No pain is like it, since (as he was himself to cry when she lay dead—and what must not the words have carried beyond the hackneyed surface pathos?) "We have only *one* mother".

The year 1800 is a notable one to Byron's biographer, for in it he made his "first dash into poetry". This adventure was in honour of his second first love—if one may use a term which occupation with his early history soon makes indispensable. The result of the "dash" has perished, but the name of its victim remains. She was his first cousin, Margaret Parker,[1] "one of the most beautiful of evanescent beings". Few girls, indeed, have left a more exquisite memory in a lover's heart. "She looked as if she had been made of a rainbow, all beauty and peace". So he wrote in a diary of 1821. Margaret died at fifteen of consumption, two years after their meeting; and Augusta Byron went to see her shortly before the end. Augusta happened casually to mention his name. He knew nothing of Margaret's illness ("being at Harrow and in the country at the time"); it was plainly not a continued episode—but as the sister spoke, the girl's shadowed face flushed into vivid, lovely colour to the very eyelids. No wonder that he never forgot her! But the elegiac verses which he wrote in 1802, the year of her death (though he, in the diary, says "Some years after"), are deplorable. Frigidly correct in such technique and such sentiment as they aspire to, they are the one dull element in an idyll as "transparent" in its beauty as the memory she left behind.

[1] Charlotte Augusta, daughter of Admiral, and sister of Captain "Jack", Byron, married Christopher Parker, son of Admiral of the Fleet Sir Peter Parker, Bart.; and this Margaret was her daughter.

Note on the Chaworth Duel

"The Coroner's jury brought in a verdict of Wilful Murder, and on the presentation of their testimony to the House of Lords, Byron pleaded for a trial 'by God and his peers', whereupon he was arrested and sent to the Tower. The case was tried by the Lords Temporal (the Lords Spiritual asked permission to withdraw), and after a defence had been read by the prisoner, 119 peers brought in a verdict of 'Not guilty of murder; guilty of manslaughter, on my honour'. Four peers only returned a verdict of 'Not guilty'. The result of the verdict was that Lord Byron claimed the benefit of the statute of Edward VI, and was discharged on paying the fees.

"The defence . . . is able and convincing . . . the accused contrived to throw the onus of criminality upon his antagonist. It was Mr. Chaworth who began the quarrel . . . it was he who insisted on an interview, not on the stairs but in a private room, who locked the door, and whose demeanour made a challenge 'to draw' inevitable . . . Lord Byron came to close quarters with his adversary, and 'as he supposed, gave the unlucky wound which he would ever reflect upon with the utmost regret'" (*Poems*, iv. note to p. 542).

The poet, in his famous letter to Coulmann of 1823, said that, so far from feeling any remorse for having killed Mr. Chaworth, who was a fire-eater (*spadassin*) . . . his grand-uncle "always kept the sword . . . in his bed-chamber, where it still was when he died" (Elze, *Life of Byron*, Authorised translation, 1872, Appendix, p. 445).

CHAPTER III

HARROW—1801–1805

Dr. Drury of Harrow—Lord Carlisle—Friendships: Clare, Delawarr, Wingfield, Long—Intellectual development—Oratory—First letters—Turbulence at Harrow—The quarrel with Dr. Butler—End of schooldays

HE had been two years with Dr. Glennie when Mrs. Byron finally flamed forth. She declared herself dissatisfied with his progress: "he must go to a public school". Lord Carlisle was appealed to, and, remembering former encounters, he hastily acquiesced. And so, at thirteen (April 1801), the boy entered at last upon the manner of life which properly belonged to his rank, and entered upon it dispossessed of every advantage—for, peer of the realm[1] though he was, he came (and his schoolfellows knew he came) from social circles wholly undistinguished, with a fortune that corresponded in no way to his title, and, despite a rich store of odd general knowledge, as "half-baked" in the formal school education as he was in everything else. When to all this is added his lameness, we can figure to ourselves the state of mind which made him write in later life: "I always *hated* Harrow till the last year and a half".

John Hanson, on bringing him to the school, had

[1] At Dulwich School he had been nicknamed the "Old English Baron"—from his "frequent boast of the superiority of an old English Barony over later creations": a kind of vapouring soon cut short at Harrow.

warned the Head-Master, Dr. Joseph Drury, that his education had been much neglected, but "thought there was a *cleverness* about him". Drury was at once convinced not only of that—"there was mind in his eye"—but of something far more valid for the boy's immediate happiness. He perceived that it was "a wild mountain-colt" that Hanson had left behind, but the colt, he thought, was "to be led by a silken string rather than by a cable"—and he obeyed the intuition. Wisest of his indulgences was that for the supersensitive vanity which was so marked a trait in Byron. The new boy, hearing from a comrade that many younger than himself were immensely more advanced in learning, fell into a mood of deep dejection. He would be placed in a class below these juniors—he would be humbled and degraded—everything would be hopeless! Drury divined the apprehensive misery, and promised him that he should not be "placed" at all until it could be with boys of his own age. From that moment he revived, and soon his shyness (he suffered much all through life from shyness) began to give way. The master kept a discreet look-out, and found some of his first impressions confirming themselves. When, not long afterwards, Lord Carlisle expressed a wish to see him, Drury hastened up to London. Carlisle was anxious to discuss future prospects, and to hear his view of the boy's abilities. "He will never be a rich man", said the guardian. Drury made no comment on that, but remarked with emphasis, "He has talents, my lord, *which will add lustre to his rank*".

Lord Carlisle raised his eyebrows. "Indeed!" said he coldly; and Drury, with some repugnance, felt that he would rather have been told of mediocrity in mind as well as in fortune.

The truth was that Mrs. Byron had left an indelible

impression on Frederick Howard, Earl of Carlisle—at one time among the most prodigious dandies of his period, and now a perfect type of the reformed rake. He desired to be kind; but to *like* the son of such a woman, even to wish him well in any but the most conventional sense, was more than he could achieve. And probably he had disturbing memories of his own mother—that Isabella Byron (sister of the notorious fifth lord) whom Fox had satirised as "a recluse in pride and rags", and who, when her eldest son was ten years old, had taken for second husband a mere baronet![1] Isabella was, indeed, of the pure Byron tradition. She wrote *Maxims for Young Ladies*, and she also wrote an answer to one Mrs. Greville's *Ode on Indifference*. The answer contained two stanzas which most of her near relatives might have signed:

"Let me drink deep the dang'rous cup
In hopes the prize to gain,
Nor tamely give the pleasure up,
For fear to share the pain.

Give me, whatever I possess,
To know and feel it all;
When youth and love no more may bless,
Let death obey my call".[2]

By the time her son comes on the stage of our story, he had been thoroughly sobered by much public office—Treasurer of the Household, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and so forth. He was also a renowned collector of pictures and statuary, and a poet to the extent of writing and publishing an enormous quantity of mediocre verse—which, in process of time, became the object of his young ward's savage satire.

The Byronic doom, then, had followed our youth in

[1] This was Sir William Musgrave, of Heaton Castle, Cumberland.
[2] *L. and J.* i. 36.

this relationship as in so many others; but now at last, as the school-life developed, he was to know what kindness and judicious authority and (above all) passionate friendship could mean. For Dr. Drury he had a deep and reverent affection. In his letters to Augusta at this period, and in his later diaries, there are many warm tributes; and Drury himself told Moore an entertaining anecdote of the later days of renown. None of the publications of which the world was talking had ever been presented to him, and, meeting in London just after *The Corsair* had appeared in 1814, he asked Byron why, "as in duty bound", he had never sent his old master any of his books. "Because you are the only man I never wish to read them", Byron answered, delightfully in the tone of them all; but then, forgetting the pose of a profligate abashed before the beloved mentor of youth, he added eagerly, "What do you think of *The Corsair*?"

Truly he could do nothing that did not epitomise himself—all pose yet all spontaneity as he inveterately was! *The Corsair* was selling at "a perfectly unprecedented rate" (as Murray had already panted), and not only so, but glorious whisperings were rife. "Its author was the veritable Conrad, the actual Corsair; part of his travels had been spent in real piracy"; and that author was helping on the craze with beautiful dark hints, with "I could an if I woulds"; and Drury was sure to have read it, and this would the more deeply move him since he was sure to have been shocked; and above all, beyond all, *had* Drury read it, and read the others? . . . We may not mock overmuch—not those of us, at any rate, who have published, and met old friends afterwards. And *he* was, with Napoleon Buonaparte, the most talked-of creature at that time alive!

But the thing of all others that Harrow brought about was the discovery of the passionate heart. There had been the love-affairs, to be sure, but the delights of comradeship were of a happier order than such fervid heats. Not that the friendships lacked ardour. "They were with me *passions* (for I was always violent)"; and indeed one hardly knows whether the traits displayed are matter for smiles or sighs. To a feminine reader, at any rate, the excess of sensibility is disturbing—nor was it shown by him alone. Jealousy, flaming perpetually, flamed mutually too. If *he* could take offence at being addressed in a letter as "my dear" instead of "my dearest", and sulk because his correspondent said he was sorry another boy had gone abroad—that correspondent could write *him* a letter so extraordinary in its matter, so striking in its manner, as to demand reproduction here.

To the Lord Byron

Harrow-on-the-Hill, *July* 28, 1805

"Since you have been so unusually unkind to me, in calling me names whenever you met me, of late, I must beg an explanation, wishing to know whether you choose to be as good friends with me as ever. I must own that, for this last month, you have entirely cut me—for, I suppose, your new cronies. But think not that I will (because you choose to take into your head some whim or other) be always giving up to you, nor do, as I observe other fellows doing, to regain your friendship; nor think that I am your friend either through interest, or because you are bigger and older than I am. No—it never was so, nor ever shall be so. I was only your friend, and am so still—unless you go on in this way, calling me names whenever you see me. I am sure you

may easily perceive I do not like it; therefore, why should you do it, unless you wish that I should no longer be your friend? . . . Though you do not let the boys bully me, yet if *you* treat me unkindly, that is to me a great deal worse.

"I am no hypocrite, Byron, nor will I, for your pleasure, ever suffer you to call me names, if you wish me to be your friend. . . . I am sure no one can say that I will cringe to regain a friendship that you have rejected. Why should I do so? Am I not your equal? Therefore, what interest can I have in doing so? When we meet again in the world (that is, if you choose it) *you* cannot advance or promote *me*, nor I you. Therefore I beg and intreat of you if you value my friendship—which, by your conduct, I am sure I cannot think you do—not to call me the names you do, nor abuse me. Till that time, it will be out of my power to call you friend. I shall be obliged for an answer as soon as it is convenient; till then, I remain yours, CLARE

"I cannot say your friend".

The writer was thirteen, Byron seventeen, for the incident belongs to his last year at Harrow; and what a picture does the letter set before us, of the handsome, cross youth (for his beauty was, at times, already remarkable), passing with his "new cronies", and breathing flame as he went on the small, hot-hearted Forsaken! The quarrel was of short duration; "our first and last", he commented in an endorsement (he kept the letter all his life)—but later reproaches from the same pen seem to contradict that assertion.[1]

[1] Another school-friend, William Harness, said of his attachments at Harrow: "He required a great deal from [his friends]—not more, perhaps, than he, from the abundance of his love, freely and fully gave—but more than they had to return".

The boy was John FitzGibbon, second Earl of Clare,[1] the "Lycus" of *Childish Recollections*, and the most beloved of all friends through all Byron's life. Not that they met often; but the feeling for this "earliest and dearest" was one of those shrined things which can almost disdain the personal contact—though that, when it was vouchsafed, caused joy so uplifting that it was "like rising from the grave". In the quasi-journal of 1821 there are two mentions of this friendship. "I never hear the word 'Clare' without a beating of the heart even *now*". The "word", one may observe in passing, is eminent among the lovely both in sound and aspect; this, when the dear memories were added, may have played some part in the emotion; but it was rooted in genuine feeling, as the subsequent entry, which speaks of their meeting, strikingly demonstrates.

PISA, *November* 5, 1821

"[In] this collection of scattered things, I had alluded to my friend Lord Clare in terms such as my feelings suggested. About a week or two afterwards, I met him on the road between Imola and Bologna, after not having met for seven or eight years. . . .

"This meeting annihilated for a moment all the years between the present time and the days of *Harrow*. It was a new and inexplicable feeling, like rising from the grave, to me. Clare, too, was much agitated—more in appearance than even myself; for I could feel his heart beat to his fingers' ends, unless, indeed, it was the pulse of my own which made me think so. . . . We were but five minutes together, and in the public road; but I hardly recollect an hour of my existence which could be weighed against them".

[1] This earl's brother, Richard, succeeded him in 1851 as third and last Earl of Clare.

They met once more. In the following year Clare came for "one *day* only" to the salmon-coloured Villa Dupuy at Leghorn. "I have a presentiment that I shall never see him again", Byron said when they parted, and his eyes filled with tears. He never did see him again, but one of the last letters from Missolonghi (March 31, 1824) was written to this "dearest Clare", whom he had "always loved better than any (*male*) thing in the world", who indeed was "the only *male* human being" for whom he felt "anything that deserves the name of friendship".[1] "All my others were men-of-the-world friendships".

But Clare, though the dearest, was not by any means the only Harrow intimate. Lord Delawarr[2] at first was given pride of place: "the most good-tempered, amiable, clever fellow in the universe. To all which he adds the quality . . . of being remarkably handsome, almost too much so for a boy". Delawarr was only nine years old at this time (1804), but already in the preceding year a copy of verses had been addressed to him:

> "In thee I fondly hoped to clasp
> A friend whom death alone could sever;
> Till envy, with malignant grasp,
> Detach'd thee from my heart for ever".

Envy seems to have treated the handsome little boy like a shuttlecock, and tossed him back to Byron—quickly, however, to receive him again with another lyric tagged on like one of the feathers; for a later address, still more poignant, is balanced throughout between passionate reproach and freezing politeness:

> "For the present we part—I will hope not for ever;
> For time and regret will restore you at last" . . .

[1] This phrase occurs in an undated letter, presumably from the context, to Mrs. Shelley, of 1823 (Moore, p. 574).

[2] George John, fifth Earl Delawarr. He married, in 1813, Lady Elizabeth Sackville.

Poor Delawarr was unequal, all along, to the strain.[1] Before Byron left Harrow, a definite breach had taken place; and though he ultimately figured as "Euryalus" in *Childish Recollections*, there *had* been a peremptory order to the publisher to "omit the whole character". They must have renewed their intercourse in London, for the old schoolfellow who refused to spend with him the day before he set out on his Albanian travels in 1809, on the plea that he was "engaged to go shopping with some ladies", is believed by most of the biographers to have been Delawarr, "who had recently in a marked manner withdrawn from him".[2] Byron was bitterly angry; but it suggested a picturesque stanza for *Childe Harold*:

> "And none did love him—though to hall and bower
> He gathered revellers from far and near,
> He knew them flatterers of the festal hour,
> The heartless Parasites of present cheer".

Two other Harrovians, very dear, were the Hon. John Wingfield and Edward Noel Long, the "Cleon" of *Childish Recollections*:

> "On the same day our studious race begun,
> On the same day our studious race was run";

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[1] In the *Life of the Rev. W. Harness* we find the following reference (in a letter of 1869) to Lord Delawarr, who had lately died: "I believe there was no actual quarrel with Byron. It was simply a case of incompatibility. The ardour of B. was more than D. could adequately meet" (*Literary Life of the Rev. William Harness*, by the Rev. A. G. L'Estrange).

[2] They were in a way connected, for the families had twice intermarried in the time of Charles I, the third Lord Delawarr's daughters, Cecilie and Lucy, having both married Byrons. Cecilie's husband was that Sir John who became the first Baron Byron. He left no heirs, and his brother Richard succeeded. The first Lord Byron's *second* wife, by the way, was a daughter of Lord Kilmorey, and the widow of Peter Warburton. Of her Pepys, in his Journal, relates that she was the seventeenth mistress of Charles II when abroad, and did not leave him till she had extorted from him an assignment of silver plate to the value of £4000, "but by delays, thanks be to God, she died before she had it."

—and Long was the only intimate who went with him to Cambridge. Wingfield was one of the "juniors and favourites whom I spoilt by indulgence". "Of all human beings I was perhaps at one time the most attached to poor Wingfield". This friend, indeed, in one letter usurps Clare's title of "earliest and dearest". Two stanzas of *Childe Harold* were consecrated to his memory;[1] he died of fever at Coimbra, Portugal, on May 14, 1811, in his twentieth year. "One of the few one could never repent of having loved"; "one whom I could have wished to have preceded in his long journey".

Edward Noel Long, John Wingfield, and George, Duke of Dorset (who was Byron's fag at Harrow, and in the early days much beloved), all died in the early twenties. Dorset was killed by a fall in the hunting-field. This was in 1815, and Byron wrote to Moore a strange, morbid letter.

"I have just been—or, rather, ought to be—very much shocked by the death of the Duke of Dorset. We were at school together, and there I was passionately attached to him. Since, we have never met . . . and it would be a paltry affectation to pretend that I had any feeling for him worthy the name. But there was a time in my life when this event would have broken my heart; and all I can say for it now is that—it is not worth breaking".

Enclosed in his next letter were the well-known verses:

"There's not a joy the world can give" . . .

—of which he "flattered himself" that they might pass for an imitation of the Irish poet. He

[1] "And thou, my friend!—since unavailing woe" . . .
(Canto i. stanzas 91, 92.)

must have written at the same time the lines beginning:

"I heard thy fate without a tear".[1]

They are among the worst he ever composed, which is not surprising, since they were written expressly to declare the lack of any feeling.

If I have dwelt long upon the school-friendships, my reason for doing so is that they seem to me of great importance in reviewing his character; and this not only because the Harrow period was formative in a high degree, but because (whatever they may have signified) these boyish experiences were, each in its varying development, recurrent through Byron's life. The brooding emotion of the attachment to Clare was repeated in the Mary Chaworth romance; the distrust, reaction from distrust, and final loss of all illusion, which mark the Delawarr affair, are still more characteristic, are indeed a kind of epitome of Byronism; while the grief of early and tragically sudden death—as in the cases of Long, Wingfield, and Dorset—is one of the sadnesses that haunted his career. He noted this himself. "Some curse hangs over me", he wrote at twenty-three in recounting the death of a later friend; and again at thirty-one, "I never could keep alive even a dog that I liked, or that liked me".

While all this luxuriance of emotion was unfolding itself, the intellectual growth was taking as determined a personal note. His general information on modern topics was "so great as to induce a suspicion that I

[1] These verses have been by some writers (myself among them) erroneously attributed to a later period—the Teresa Guiccioli period; and said to have been written during her illness at Ravenna, when Byron thought she was going into consumption. They were not published until two years after his death, in a Paris edition of his poems.

could only collect so much information from *Reviews*, because I was never *seen* reading; but always idle, and in mischief, or at play. The truth is that I read eating, read in bed, read when no one else read, and had read all sorts of reading since I was five years old". He drew up, in 1807 at Cambridge, a list of the books he had been through: "the greater part of them before the age of fifteen". It oppresses the imagination. Of historical writers the number cited would be by itself overwhelming; his mind must have been gorged, the half undigested. "There is a way of *scouting* through books", remarked the *Westminster Review* in 1830, commenting on Moore's infatuated awe before the list, "which some people call reading, and we are afraid much of the reading here set down was of that description". History was the passion of his mind, we should remember;[1] but the biographical muster is also stupendous, for, after setting down many names, he adds, "with thousands not to be detailed". Poetry came next; philosophy was a bad fourth; law, geography, "eloquence", and divinity were comparatively nowhere. The note on divinity is frank. "Blair, Porteous, Tillotson, Hooker", he enumerates, "—all very tiresome. I abhor books of religion". There is a summing-up and a confession: "Since I left Harrow, I have become idle and conceited, from scribbling rhyme and making love to women".

At school his destiny was believed to be that of an orator. He was fluent, turbulent, copious in declamation; he selected always for speech-days the most vehement passages—such as Lear's address to the storm, and the tirade of Zanga in Young's *Revenge*. Drury

[1] Next to history, descriptions of travels in the East particularly interested him. "All books upon the East I could meet with I had read before I was ten years old".

was struck by all this, but the instance which led him to foretell an orator's destiny was a declamatory exercise composed by the boy himself. These efforts were always rehearsed, before public delivery, to the Head-Master; and at the rehearsal Drury was already pleased with Byron's display. The day came; all the other boys delivered the words that had been already "passed", and Byron did the same in the beginning of his speech. But suddenly Drury realised that he was reciting something quite different from the draft—and reciting it with such boldness and rapidity as to alarm the listener. Surely he must break down! But he went on to the end; there was not a falter nor a stumble, and the whole seemed far more striking than the original. . . . When all was over, Drury inquired of him why he had altered the speech. He declared that he had not altered it. Drury pressed him for the truth. "I did not know that I had deviated by a letter", the boy reiterated; and the observant master believed and understood. "He was so impressed by the subject that he hurried on to expressions and colourings more striking than his pen had expressed".

He was very idle. "Always in scrapes"; "I rarely knew my lesson, but when I did know it, I knew it well". His schoolbooks were scribbled over with clumsy interlined translations . . . "the most ordinary Greek words had their English signification scrawled under them". His incorrigible laziness, joined to "his propensity to make others laugh and disregard their Employments as much as himself", soon got him into serious trouble. On his entrance to the school he had been placed in the house of Henry Drury, the Doctor's eldest son, who was an assistant-master. When the

Christmas holidays of the 1802 term were over, Byron refused to return to Harrow unless he were removed from this care. Henry was quite as eager to get rid of him as he could be to go, but the Head had hesitated to consent until the boy's request was thus urgently made. He was then placed (January 1803) in Mr. Evans's house, and every one hoped that this was the dawn of a new era. By May 1 those hopes were dead. The date is interesting, for upon it the first of the vivid, pulsating things that we know as Byron's letters came into the world.[1] It was to his mother; he was fifteen.

"I am sorry to say that Mr. Henry Drury has behaved to me in a manner that I neither *can* nor *will* bear. He has seized now an opportunity of showing his resentment towards me. To-day in church I was talking to a Boy who was sitting next me; *that* perhaps was not right, but hear what followed. After church he spoke not a word to me, but he took this Boy to his pupil-room, where he abused me in a most violent manner, called me *blackguard*, said he *would* and *could* have me expelled from the School, and bade me thank his *Charity* that *prevented* him; this is the message he sent me, to which I shall return no answer, but submit my case to *you* and those you may think *fit* to *consult*. Is this fit usage for anybody? had I *stole* or behaved in the most *abominable* way to him, his language could not have been more outrageous. What must the boys think

[1] In the *Letters and Journals* there are three of earlier date. The second, to his mother, dated March 13, 1799, when he was eleven, has a hint of his peculiar vivacity: "Mr. Rogers could attend me every night at a separate hour from the Miss Parkynses, and I am astonished you do not acquiesce in this Scheme, which would keep me in mind of what I have almost entirely forgot. . . . If some plan of this kind is not adopted I shall be called, or rather branded with the name of a dunce, which you know I never could bear" (i. 8).

of me to hear such a message ordered to be delivered to me by a *Master*? Better let him take away my life than ruin my *Character*. . . . Among other things I forgot to tell you he said he had a great mind to expel the Boy for speaking to me, and that if he ever again spoke to me he would expel him. Let him explain his meaning; he abused me, but he neither did nor can mention anything bad of me, further than what every boy else in the School has done. . . . If you do not take notice of this, I will leave the School myself . . . better that I should suffer anything than this. . . . If you love me, you will now show it".[1]

Mrs. Byron sent this explosive to Hanson, who sent it to Drury. The result was little short of a formal apology for Henry's hasty word. "I am sorry", wrote his father, "that it was ever uttered; but certainly it was never intended to make so deep a wound". He continued in a strain of particular and anxious affection for the boy. "He possesses, as his letter shows, a mind that feels, and that can discriminate reasonably on points in which it conceives itself injured. . . . I feel particularly hurt to see him idle, and negligent, and apparently indifferent". . . . But even this letter ends on a hopeful note.

That Byron really was—as Drury had at first believed—the proverbial creature to be "led with a silken thread" is, I think, more than doubtful. The thread could draw him only so far as his heart would go too; and his heart was hot, turbulent, and as easily drawn in the wrong as in the right direction. Reason rarely spoke, and when it did, was most often silenced. No matter how gentle it be, authority must ever smack of discipline; and discipline had, for Byron, as little attraction as it is possible to conceive. There was

[1] *L. and J.* i. 12, 13.

something in the nature of the boy, as of the man, that was at bottom wholly unmalleable. He would learn and submit when he chose, and at no other hour; and there was arrogance even in the submission. "So *he*, Byron, had elected to act". When he did not so elect, all trouble must take its course, for the only thing that mattered was his election. Drury, in the end, sadly realised this—to the extent of desiring him to leave the school; moreover, as we shall see, his very affection for Drury caused the final months at Harrow (under Dr. Butler) to be one long scene of violent insolence. Such a tribute could not gratify; nor did it reflect any honour on Drury's training. But these were not the aspects to influence Byron. We may suspect that the picturesque, here as elsewhere, was the snare: how scenic to hate and despise Butler because one had loved and respected Drury, and because Drury's brother had been a candidate for the prize that Butler won! . . . I think there is no doubt that Drury, for all his sagacity, failed to comprehend the innate rebelliousness of his pupil's nature. The charm, the brilliancy, the quick warm heart—these he understood, and, as it were, succumbed to; we might call the Head-Master of Harrow Byron's first conquest!

By the time the Christmas holidays of 1804–5 arrived, matters had come to a crisis. Byron spent the vacation with John Hanson's family in London, and told Hanson that he wished to leave Harrow. Hanson wrote to Drury, urging that the boy was too young to finish with school. Drury's reply, dated December 29, 1804, puts a startling gloss on the matter. "*The wish*", he wrote, "*originated with me.* During his last residence . . . his conduct gave me much trouble and uneasiness. . . . If we part now, we may entertain affectionate dispositions towards each other, and his

Lordship will have left the school with credit".[1] The Doctor's urgent advice was that he should go to a private tutor; but Lord Carlisle and Hanson joined in an appeal to allow him to return to Harrow. Drury yielded, and Byron remained there till July 1805; "always", as he confessed himself, "cricketing, rebelling, *rowing*—(from *row*, not boat-rowing, a different practice) and in all manner of mischiefs". The rebelling came to a head on Drury's retirement from the head-mastership in March 1805. There were three candidates for the vacant chair —Mark Drury (his brother), Mr. Evans, and the Rev. George Butler, then Fellow, tutor, and classical lecturer at Sydney Sussex College, Cambridge. A strong party was formed for Mark Drury. At its head was at first young Wildman;[2] Byron had not then declared himself for any of the candidates. The Mark Drury faction was anxious to attach him, and one of the boys said to Wildman, "Byron, I know, won't join, because he doesn't choose to act second to any one; but, by giving up the leadership to him, you may at once secure him". Wildman, surprisingly enough, gave it up, and Byron "at once" took command.

Dr. Butler, who was only thirty-one,[3] prevailed; and paid for his victory by becoming the "Pomposus" of two poetical attacks. Not only so, but he found himself faced by a fierce personal enemy in the boy, who was now a resident in his House. One day Butler found the iron gratings gone from the hall window. Byron had torn them down in a fit of rage. When summoned to give a reason for such violence, he

[1] *L. and J.* i. 52.

[2] Many years later, when Colonel Wildman, he bought Newstead Abbey from Byron.

[3] "A Boy, o'er Boys he holds a trembling reign,
More fit than they to seek some school again".
These lines were in the MS. draft of *Childish Recollections*.

answered coolly that "they darkened the hall." Again, at the end of term, Butler, according to custom, invited the upper form to dine with him — a kind of royal command. Byron refused. He was asked, in the presence of other boys of the same standing, his reason for this second insolence.

"Why, Dr. Butler", he replied, "if you should happen to come into my neighbourhood when I was staying at Newstead, I certainly should not ask you to dine with me, and therefore I feel that I ought not to dine with you".[1]

The "Pomposus" portraits were mere caricatures, as he afterwards admitted, although the feeling of enmity endured for some time after he left Harrow. He wrote to his ancient foe, Henry Drury (by that time a close personal friend), in 1808, alluding to Butler: "We have only spoken once since my departure from Harrow in 1805, and then he politely told Tatersall[2] that I was not a proper associate for his pupils". On February 21 of the same year, however, we find him "now reconciled to Butler"; and when in 1809 he went on his Albanian tour, he took with him a gold pen given him by the Doctor, and "a treasure of a German servant, named Fritz", who had been recommended by Pomposus himself!

Thus, under a cloud, Byron left Harrow in July 1805 —seventeen and a half years old. What did he bring away from the life which he had entered on so ill equipped? He brought at any rate a much developed heart and body. Of the mind we may suppose that the progress had followed inevitable lines. Wherever he

[1] Moore, on quoting this in his second edition, added a note to say that Dr. Butler assured him it had very little foundation in fact.

[2] John Cecil Tatersall was the "Davus" of *Childish Recollections*: "the laughing herald of the harmless pun". He died at twenty-four.

had been he would have learned what suited him, and learned that only. . . . There was ground for some apprehension. Nearly all his close friends at Harrow had been much younger than himself, and outside the school, his chosen comradeship had hitherto been with the son of one of his tenants at Newstead, immeasurably his inferior in rank — and, again, years younger. The misery of his home-life would oppress him the more heavily now because his heart *was* developed—and because, within these last two years, it had been much wounded as well. The Mary Chaworth episode had begun in 1803 during the summer holidays. . . . On the other hand, there was the University to look forward to. Intimacies would spring up there, and though individual ones might throb and smart as they had done at Harrow, the boy now knew besides what comradeship was. And there was hope in the great increase of his bodily activities. He had given proofs of capacity for many athletic exercises. "At Harrow I fought my way very fairly. I think I lost but one battle out of seven". He was noted for feats in swimming — could mount a younger boy on his shoulders and dive thus into the water. Cricket, too, he enjoyed; his reputation for the game rests on the match between Eton and Harrow on August 2, 1805,[1] when, says a note in the *Letters and Journals*: "Lord Stratford de Redcliffe remembered seeing a 'moody-looking boy' dismissed for a small score. The boy was Byron".[2]

Despite the enmity with Butler, he was so unhappy at leaving school that "it broke my very rest for the last quarter, counting the days that remained. . . .

[1] Played in the old cricket-ground in Dorset Square.

[2] Lord Stratford de Redcliffe also said that another boy "ran" for Byron in this match (*Dict. Nat. Biog.*).

One of the deadliest and heaviest feelings of my life was to feel that I was no longer a boy"; and Harrow was sung in several poems of the earliest volume.

> "Again I behold where for hours I have pondered,
> As reclining, at eve, on yon tombstone I lay"—

the famous "Peachey" grave in the pretty little churchyard that adjoins the school, so well known to be his favourite resting-place that the boys called it "Byron's tomb". Here he would sometimes lie for hours, gazing over the wide and radiant prospect, where the battlements of Windsor shone in the evening light, and London rose, as it were, from the sea: "A fairy city of the heart", as he was to write in later years, of a lovelier town.

Before the tomb, on the side looking towards Windsor, there now stands a tablet inscribed with the opening of the *Lines written beneath an Elm in the Churchyard at Harrow*. The elm (no doubt to preserve what may be still preserved of so historic a tree) has been cut down to within a few feet of the ground; there are no branches to droop or moan,

> "And seem to whisper, as they gently swell,
> 'Take, while thou canst, a lingering last farewell'".

But the thought of him follows every footstep that one takes in the place. From the first sight of the high-set spires to the climbing of the hill; in the hall where he thrice stood to declaim the "passionate speech" he loved; in the church where gleam the tablets of the Drury family[1] and of "Pomposus" and his wife; in the churchyard, above all, where the air blows embalmed with the scent of many crimson rose trees—Harrow-

[1] One of Henry Drury's sons was named Byron. His tablet is in the church.

on-the-Hill is lyrical of Byron. He found there, and there only throughout all his life, "a home, a world, a paradise"—

> "Where friendship bow'd before the shrine of truth,
> And Love, without his pinion, smil'd on Youth".

CHAPTER IV

MARY CHAWORTH

The Dream—The heiress of Annesley—Byron's rival—The trip to Matlock—John Musters prevails—The farewell—Meeting again: letters and verses—Mary's misery—Her death

ALONG with the school-life there had run, since the summer of 1803, the course of that love-affair whose influence upon him has been so grossly exaggerated by his biographers. But this has been because it was so grossly exaggerated by himself, in that most deceptive of all moods—the sentimental-reminiscent one. That *he* believed in the tears which, long after it had been for anything but sentimentality forgotten, the revocation of this episode could draw from him, adds no tincture of reality to the flow. *The Dream* (he said) "was written at Diodati in 1816, amid a flood of tears". Yes; and with just such tears every one of us can blot the page when we enter the region of self-pity. It is a mood most incident to, most fruitful for, poets; let us rejoice that they enjoy it, and let us, for our part, see it as it is—sincere, but sincere through its very insincerity. If, through the thirteen years that had swept by since that boyish passion absorbed him, Byron had been constantly occupied with its remembrance, *The Dream* could never have been written. Just because it crept back into his consciousness, after many years of oblivion, in an hour of deep and ever-deepening bitter-

ness, did those memories take substance with such authentic accent, such limpid truth and purity. They were almost as fresh to him as to his readers!

He had met Mary Chaworth first, probably, in London; and during the summer holidays of 1803 the acquaintance was renewed at Nottingham. Mrs. Byron was at that time lodging in the town, awaiting her move to Southwell, where, in the latter part of the same year, she took up a fixed residence at Burgage Manor, on the Green. Newstead was let, in March 1803, to Lord Grey de Ruthyn, whom Byron came so passionately and mysteriously to detest;[1] but at this time they were great friends, and he often slept at the Abbey. About three miles from Newstead, and nine from Nottingham,[2] stood (and stands) Annesley Hall, where Mary Chaworth lived with her mother, Mrs. Clarke. She was heiress to the estate, she was two years older than her boy-lover, and she was grand-niece of the Mr. Chaworth whom William, fifth Lord Byron, had killed. There was a Romeo and Juliet flavour in the situation which would have been enough in itself to attract Byron, overflowing as he was at this time with newly awakened sensibilities; and the heiress of Annesley was plainly something of a coquette. A girl of seventeen and a schoolboy—she in the dawning days of power, he still under discipline; she volatile and he serious (as he said in later years)—the position is familiar, and its effects

[1] "I am not reconciled to Lord Grey, *and I never will.* He was once my *Greatest Friend*, my reasons for ceasing that Friendship are such as I cannot explain. . . . They are Good ones, however. He has forfeited all title to my esteem, but I hold him in too much *contempt* ever to *hate him*" (*L. and J.* i. 23).

[2] Newstead, Annesley, and Hucknall Torkard (his burial-place) form the three points of a triangle, each of whose sides may be about two miles in length (see "A Byronian Ramble", *Athenæum*, August 23 and 30, 1834).

are almost invariable. Mary was considered "handsome"—a pronounced brunette, with dark eyes and clouds of dense black hair. Something of *espièglerie* lurks in the little oval face, which to modern eyes is barely pretty, though we can guess at a mobile charm when laughter lit it. Byron, on the other hand, is at fifteen not to be figured as attractive. He had a tendency to fatness (his mother was by this time monstrously corpulent), and his features had not yet refined and kindled into the beauty which was soon to reveal itself.[1] Moreover, he was lame, and Miss Chaworth loved dancing. She accepted his adoration; she may even, in very romantic moonlit hours, have imagined herself into a kind of reciprocity; which of us has not passed through the melting moments of such a relationship? She did give him her picture—which meant something in those days; there is a tradition that she gave him a ring.[2] If she did, the instant consequence of her gift was the announcement of her engagement to "another". The story goes that this Mr. John Musters—a fox-hunting squire of the neighbourhood—was bathing with Byron in the river which ran through his estate of Colwick Hall, and suddenly perceived among the boy's clothes, scattered on the bank, a ring which he recognised as Mary's. He at once took possession; Byron claimed it, but Musters refused to restore. They contended hotly, and soon Musters mounted his horse and galloped to Annesley Hall, there to confront the girl with the disputed token. She confessed that Byron wore it as her

[1] Elizabeth Pigot, the platonic friend of later Southwell days, described him, at their first meeting in 1804, as "a fat, bashful boy, with his hair combed straight over his forehead".

[2] This rests on the authority of the Countess Guiccioli, to whom Byron must of course have told it. But a ring is a more flattering token than a picture; and pictures had turned into rings before then, and will so turn again.

gift—but she solaced the rival by promising to declare without delay her engagement to himself.

There is nothing very reprehensible in all this; it merely gives an impression of shallowness of feeling. She cannot have cared much for either lover, one judges. More than probably she did not; of Mary Chaworth's real calibre we know practically nothing. She was "the bright Morning-Star of Annesley", and she was the Lady of the Dream: beyond that, she scarcely exists for us, except as, in later years, a miserably unhappy wife. . . . But let us see what effects her coquetry had upon the boy who now for the first time met, on intimate terms, a "grown-up young lady". The earliest one was as violent as most things were with Byron. After the summer vacation of 1803, he refused to go back to school. Drury wrote to ask for an explanation, got no answer, and then applied to Hanson. Hanson wrote to Mrs. Byron, and on October 30 received the following answer, which enclosed a letter to herself from the boy.

"The truth is, I cannot get him to return to school, though I have done all in my power for six weeks past. He has no indisposition that I know of, but love, desperate love, the *worst* of all *maladies* in my opinion. In short, the Boy is distractedly in love with Miss Chaworth, and he has not been with me three weeks all the time he has been in this County, but spent all his time at Annesley. If my son was of a proper age, and the lady *disengaged*, it is the last of all connexions that I would wish to take place; it has given me much uneasiness".[1]

This was the period during which he still "*hated* Harrow"; he hated Nottingham too, where his mother was then lodging; so that everything combined to keep

[1] *L. and J.* i. 16.

him at Annesley and Newstead as much as might be, and it is evident that Mary Chaworth (though even then, apparently, known to be pledged to Musters) showed him favour enough to keep him dangling at her side. The "Morning-Star" here loses some of the lustre which Moore lavishly assigns her as the paramount good influence of Byron's life. She seems to emerge as an ordinary young lady of the drawing-rooms, "in love" with a good-looking country clown, but very willing to have a *soupirant*, however negligible, at her beck and call. For we may safely conjecture that if Mary had told her adorer to go back to Harrow, he would have gone. He did not return until January 1804—missing the whole autumn term.

The summer holidays had been vibrant both with joy and anguish. There had been a trip with her party to Matlock and a *tête-à-tête* in a boat, during which they crossed, in a cavern, a stream which followed so close under a rock that the boat could only be pushed along by a stooping ferryman who waded at the stern. More than two people could not go in a boat; and they must lie down. "I recollect my sensations", he wrote in 1821, "but cannot describe them, and it is as well". They were of a different kind in the evening, when the party went to one of the balls which were held in the Assembly Rooms at Matlock. Here the sources of pain were manifold, for Mary excelled in the dance, and it was the custom to accept as partners total strangers; while he, forcibly excluded from all active share in the festivity, felt the old wound reopening with a pang that made all former pangs mere nothings.[1] He attacked her bitterly; of course she laughed at him; and, to complete his humiliation, a terrible guy of a Scotchwoman came up

[1] Elze compares this with a "strikingly similar" incident in Scott's life; but Scott "had the satisfaction of leading his fair one in to supper".

and loudly claimed him as a cousin. . . . "I hope you like your friend!" he had hissed in Mary's ear as she came back from dancing with her stranger; now she contrived to pass close to him in the throng, and to murmur mockingly, with a girlish grimace, "I hope you like *yours*!"

But away from the Assembly Rooms all was bliss. "I passed the summer vacation among the Malvern Hills"—already familiar, for in 1801 he had spent the summer at Cheltenham with his mother, and had "watched the hills every afternoon at sunset with a sensation I cannot describe". They were the first "mountains" he had seen since Lachin-y-gair and Morven; and now, in 1803, he was looking at them with Mary. "Those were the days of romance!" he said to Medwin in 1822. "She was the *beau idéal* of all that my youthful fancy could paint of beautiful; and I have taken all my fables about the celestial nature of women from the perfection my imagination created in her—I say created, for I found her, like the rest of the sex, anything but angelic".

In 1821 he wrote in the *Detached Thoughts*, recalling this sojourn: "We were a party—a Mr. W., two Miss W.'s, Mr. and Mrs. Cl—ke" (her mother and stepfather), "Miss M. and *my* M. A. C. Alas! why do I say *My*? Our union would have healed feuds, in which blood had been shed by our fathers; it would have joined lands, broad and rich; it would have joined at least *one* heart, and two persons not ill-matched in years (she is two years my elder); and—and—what has been the result? *She* has married a man older than herself, been wretched, and separated. I have married, and am separated; and yet *we* are *not* united".

But the probabilities are as strong in one direction as in the other. Elsewhere, in the same quasi-diary, he

says: "I doubt sometimes, after all, whether a quiet and unagitated life would have suited me". We may go further, and say that "a quiet and unagitated life" not only would not have suited him, but was unthinkable for him—wedded to mere routine though he often showed himself. But that routine had to be of his own choosing, and was most followed when living alone. No wife, at any rate, could have shared it. And, moreover, it was sometimes open to interpretations which are usually foreign to the word. "If I stay six weeks in a place, I require six months to get out of it"—and what did he do, in some of the places!

Back at Annesley, after the Derbyshire excursion, he now—having conquered a superstitious dread of the family pictures, which he fancied to have "a grudge against him because of the Duel, and to be ready to come out of their frames and haunt him"—became almost a fixture in the house. The days were spent in riding with Mary and her cousin, in sitting lost in dreams beside her, and in shooting at a door which opened on the terrace of the Hall, and which, when Moore wrote, "still bore the marks of his shots". There was music too; Mary could play and sing, and one of her ditties, the Welsh air "Mary Anne", was very often pleaded for. Mary Anne was her full name, not then so overlaid with unromantic associations as we now have it—a love-sick boy could gloat upon it without being more ridiculous than usual. Very love-sick he must have been by this time, for now there was no doubt that she was in love with "handsome Jack Musters". "He was one of the most eminent sportsmen of his day", said a writer[1] in the *Athenæum* in 1834; and he was also, in a florid, stupid sort of way, very good-looking. (A portrait of him by

[1] "A Byronian Ramble", *Athenæum*, August 23 and 30, 1834.

Reynolds, belonging to Lt.-Col. W. H. Poë, was shown in the Japanese-British Exhibition of 1910.) She had seen him first at a fox-hunt—"the Unspeakable in pursuit of the Uneatable"; but it was not so that she would, in those days at any rate, have characterised him. No; for she would stand, on the famed Diadem Hill,[1]

> "Looking afar if yet her lover's steed
> Kept pace with her expectancy, and flew".

The steed would have come "along the road that winds up the common from Hucknall", says the same *Athenæum* writer; and thither Mary's dark eyes gazed, and Byron's too:

> "For his eye followed hers, and saw with hers"—

though not, we may suppose, with the same admiration for Jack Musters. To show the absorbed maiden a locket which an earlier love had given him (Moore thinks it may have been the exquisite dead cousin, Margaret Parker) can have availed little for solace against these hours of boyish jealousy: we may conjecture that her attention and interest were perfunctory. And indeed it was during the latter part of the same holidays that the most poignant incident of the affair occurred. "He either was told of, or overheard, Miss Chaworth saying to her maid, 'Do you think I could care anything for that lame boy?' This speech" (says Moore, on the authority of Byron's own Memoranda) "was like a shot through the heart. Though late at night when he heard it, he instantly darted out of the house, and scarcely knowing whither he ran, never stopped till he found himself at Newstead"—three miles away. It gives us the measure of his young infatuation that so agonising a stab could be forgotten.

[1] The spur of the long ridge of Howatt Hill, which lies about a mile to the south-east of Annesley Hall.

He went back to Harrow in January 1804, "more deeply enamoured than ever", and passed the next holidays too in her neighbourhood. "I now began to fancy myself a man, and to make love in earnest", he told Medwin—to whom, however, he told many a fib. For Medwin (John Cordy Jeaffreson's "perplexing simpleton") was the dedicated victim of Byron's favourite game of mystification: Medwin would swallow anything. The story he heard differs considerably from Moore's, who assigns only six weeks to the whole of the "Chaworth love-affair". Medwin heard that, in the holidays of 1804, "Our meetings were stolen ones, and my letters passed through the medium of a confidant. A gate leading from Mr. Chaworth's grounds to those of my mother" (plainly a fib, for Southwell and Annesley are several miles apart) "was the place of our interviews. But the ardour was all on my side. I was serious; she was volatile. She liked me as a younger brother, and treated me and laughed at me as a boy. She, however, gave me her picture, and that was something to make verses on".

With his return to Harrow in the end of 1804, the dream—if it could be called a dream—was over. He said his good-bye to her on the historic hill. With quiet voice and quiet face he spoke. "The next time I see you, I suppose you will be Mrs. Chaworth".[1]

"I hope so", she replied.

That is Moore's account; *The Dream* gives a different setting to the farewell.

> "Within an antique oratory[2] stood
> The Boy of whom I spake" . . .

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[1] Her husband, for some time, assumed her name.

[2] "A small room built over the porch . . . and looking into the courtyard" (E. H. Coleridge, Introduction to *The Dream*. *Poems*, iv. 31).

and when the interview with "the Lady of his love" was over,

> ". . . he passed
> From out the mossy gate of that old Hall,
> And mounting on his steed he went his way;
> And ne'er repassed that hoary threshold more".

In the following year (August 1805) Mary was married to John Musters. There had been a letter from Byron to Augusta in June: "The later one makes one's self miserable with the matrimonial clog, the better"; and to all correspondents he complained of utter ennui, besides the never-failing strain of the quarrels with his mother. He wrote, in after years, of Mary's marriage: "*This* threw me out again 'alone on a wide, wide sea'. In the year 1804, I recollect meeting my sister at General Harcourt's in Portland Place. I was then *one* thing, and *as* she had always till then found me. When we met again in 1805 (she told me since) my temper and disposition were so completely altered that I was hardly to be recognised. I was not then sensible of the change, but I can believe it, and account for it". We may remind ourselves that between 1804 and 1805 had come the great change from school to university life—from boyhood to young manhood; and also a prolonged residence with Mrs. Byron, which could not leave any temper unaltered for the worse.

Moore's account of Byron's hearing the news of the marriage is well known, and is told on the authority of "a friend who was present". But John Cordy Jeaffreson pours contempt on the story, pointing out the similarity between it and the hearing of the same news about his child-love, Mary Duff—an incident, moreover, which had happened only the year before.[1] Mrs. Byron had then been sufficiently alarmed by her son's de-

[1] "When I was sixteen" (1804).

meanour; is it likely (asks Jeaffreson) that she would have repeated her—in the first instance unconscious—cruelty at so short an interval? Moreover, the news can scarcely have been news; the boy would either have known it already or have been hourly expecting to hear it, of neighbours so near, so intimate, and so prominent in the social life of the place. Jeaffreson's point is striking. More than probably, almost certainly, his explanation is the just one: the name of Mary Duff "got mixed", in the gossip of the tattling little town, with the name of Mary Chaworth.

He met her again in 1808, when she had been for two years a mother.[1] Mr. Chaworth-Musters invited him to dine at Annesley not long before he left England on his Albanian tour. He did, then, revisit Annesley Hall; "but" (says Mr. E. H. Coleridge) "it is possible that he avoided the 'mossy gate' of set purpose, and entered by another way".[2] He has left three descriptions of his feelings—one in prose, the others in verse. The former was contained in a letter of November 3, 1808. "You know, laughing is the sign of a rational animal . . . I think so, too, but unluckily my spirits don't always keep pace with my opinions. I had not so much scope for risibility the other day as I could have wished, for I was seated near a woman to whom, when a boy, I was as much attached as boys generally are, and more than a man should be. I knew

[1] Her eldest child, a daughter, was born in 1806. This daughter married a Mr. Hamond of Westacre, Norfolk, and was living in January 1898, aged ninety-two (*Poems*, i. 277).

[2] But is it certain that the dinner-party *was* at Annesley Hall? It may have been at John Musters's own place, Colwick Hall, which was also in the near neighbourhood. There is nothing in Byron's letters to indicate which; and Mary seems to have "gone" to Annesley when she separated from her husband.

this before I went, and was determined to be valiant and converse with *sang froid*; but instead I forgot my valour and my nonchalance, and never opened my lips even to laugh, far less to speak, and the lady was almost as absurd as myself. . . . You will think all this great nonsense; if you had seen it, you would have thought it still more ridiculous. What fools we are! We cry for a plaything, which, like children, we are never satisfied with till we break open, though like them we cannot get rid of it by putting it on the fire".[1]

The poems are the stanzas *To a Lady on being asked my Reason for Quitting England in the Spring*, and the better-known verses, "Well! thou art happy". The two-year-old daughter had been exhibited—was it the conscious cruelty of the coquette, or the unconscious cruelty of the new-made mother?—and he had found it hard to conceal his emotion.

"When late I saw thy favourite child,
I thought my jealous heart would break;
But when the unconscious infant smil'd,
I kiss'd it for its mother's sake.

I kiss'd it—and repress'd my sighs,
Its father in its face to see;
But then it had its mother's eyes,
And they were all to love and me.

. . . . . .

I deem'd that Time, I deem'd that Pride,
Had quenched at length my boyish flame;
Nor knew, till seated by thy side,
My heart in all—save hope—the same.

Yet was I calm; I knew the time
My heart would thrill before thy look;
But now to tremble were a crime—
We met—and not a nerve was shook.

I saw thee gaze upon my face,
Yet meet with no confusion there:
One only feeling couldst thou trace—
The sullen calmness of despair".

[1] *Memoir of Rev. Francis Hodgson*, i. 105.

Was she happy? These verses are discrepant with the letter to Hodgson; and when he tells her, in the other lyric, that he leaves England because he "could not view his Paradise, without the wish of dwelling there", that while near her "he sighs for all he knew before"—we can hardly avoid asking ourselves, "What did *she* sigh for?" . . . By this time, the jilted schoolboy was a dazzlingly handsome and "experienced" young man, against whom, too, as a budding poet, the mighty *Edinburgh Review* had thought it worth while to use all its thunder. What such a youth would have thought of John Musters we can well divine; was there, that evening, already an indication that Mary had come to think something not greatly different? She became, at any rate, a miserably unhappy wife. In 1813 she separated from Musters—whose infidelities and cruelties were flagrant—and went, with her children and a friend, Miss Radford, to live at Annesley. During this sojourn there was a proposal of a visit from Byron. He gives two accounts of it, which contradict one another. To Medwin he said, "She was at length separated from Mr. M——, and proposed an interview with me, but by the advice of my sister I declined it". In the letter to M. J. J. Coulmann (in 1823) this is the altered aspect which the incident acquires. "I had not seen her for many years when an occasion offered to me, January 1814.[1] I was upon the point, *with her consent*,[2] of paying her a visit, when my sister, who has always had more influence over me than any one else, persuaded me not to do it; 'for', said she, 'if you go, you will fall in love again, and then there will

[1] I quote from *Poems*, 1903, i. note to p. 283, where Mr. Coleridge refers to *Letters and Journals*, in the edition of 1901. In the edition of 1904 of *Letters and Journals*, the passage runs: "I had not seen her for many years. When an occasion offered, I was on the point, etc." (vi. 234).

[2] Italics mine.

be a scene; one step will lead to another, *et cela fera un éclat'*. I was guided by these reasons".

An undated letter from Mary herself, preserved among the Byron letters,[1] leaves the point undecided. "If you come down to Newstead before we leave Annesley, [I] *see* no *reason* why you should not call on us. . . . We are very anxious to see you, and yet know how we shall feel on the occasion—*formal*, I dare say, at the *first*; but our meeting must be confined to our *trio*, and then I think we shall be more at our ease. *Do write* me, and make a *sacrifice* to *friendship*, which I shall consider your visit". She either wrote to him again or had written before, for he says to Augusta in an undated letter (certainly, however, of January 1814): "M. has written again—*all friendship*—and really very simple and pathetic—*bad usage—paleness—ill-health*—old *friendship—once—good motive*—virtue—and so forth". That would be a very exaggerated gloss to put upon any phrase in the letter from which I have quoted. Again, on January 12, he writes to Augusta: "More news from Mrs. *—*all friendship*; you shall see her". Augusta was about to pay him a visit at Newstead. She stayed three weeks, "sauntering and dozing very quietly, and not unhappily".[2] If he kept his promise of her "seeing" Mrs. Chaworth-Musters, there is no reference to the meeting.

In 1817 (when Byron had left England for ever) a reconciliation took place between Mary and her husband; but she had been so bitterly wretched that she never regained health and spirits—she was, indeed, for some time in 1816 out of her mind, "and would sit for days and weeks alone and secluded, weeping over the poems which Byron had written to her". In 1832, when rioters from Nottingham plundered Colwick Hall

[1] See *L. and J.* iii. note to p. 7.

[2] *L. and J.* iii. 24 and 32.

(the estate of Musters), she and her daughter were obliged to rush out and hide themselves in the shrubbery. The cold and the terror so shattered her that in February she died, at Wiverton Hall, near Nottingham. John Musters lived until 1850, and after his death every relic of his wife and her ancient family was sold by public auction.[1]

The "peculiar diadem of trees" had long been destroyed. In a fit of rage at the publication of *The Dream*, and the blazing publicity into which it brought his name (his wife was then living away from him in her own home at Annesley Hall), John Musters had them all cut down. The *Athenæum* pilgrim of 1834 spoke to a mechanic of the neighbourhood about this sacrifice.

"Trees that might be seen so far!"

"Seen, sir!" exclaimed the man; "those trees were seen all over the world".

This is all we know[2] of the relations between Byron and Mary Chaworth. His remark to Medwin that he "found her, like the rest of the sex, anything but angelic", may well have no bearing except upon the early coquetries. She drew her own character, shortly before her death in 1832 (aged only thirty-six), in a letter to one of her daughters. "Soon led, easily pleased, very hasty, and very relenting, with a heart moulded in warm and affectionate fashion". So she may indeed have been —that bright Morning-Star of Annesley, whose light was to be so clouded.

> ". . . —Oh! she was changed
> As by the sickness of the soul; her mind
> Had wandered from its dwelling, and her eyes,

[1] Karl Elze, *Life of Lord Byron.*

[2] For allusion to a recent theory of Byron's later relations with Mrs. Musters, see Appendix III.: "Medora Leigh".

They had not their own lustre, but the look
Which is not of the earth; she was become
The Queen of a fantastic realm; her thoughts
Were combinations of disjointed things;
. . . . . .
And this the world calls frenzy; but the wise
Have a far deeper madness. . . .
. . . . . .
My dream was past; it had no further change.
It was of a strange order, that the doom
Of these two creatures should be thus traced out
Almost like a reality—the one
To end in madness—both in misery".

CHAPTER V

SOUTHWELL—1804–1807

Burgage Manor—Augusta Leigh—Byron's letters from Southwell—The Pigots—Social relations—His unhappy home-life—Flight to London and Littlehampton—Harrogate—Theatricals at Southwell—Flirtation and platonics—Life at Southwell—He leaves Southwell, and forgets old friends

HIS first stay at Mrs. Byron's new abode, Burgage Manor, Southwell, was during the Easter holidays of 1804. It was a square, homely-looking house, which she had evidently taken furnished, for Moore speaks of the good library belonging to the owner. Southwell is the typical small English country town—very small, for at the present day it has a population of only just over three thousand.[1] It stands, a few miles north of Nottingham and east of Newstead, in an undulating plain, rich in pasture-land; and possesses two "show" buildings — the fine old Norman Minster (where the Newstead monks' brass eagle serves as lectern), and the ruins of a former palace of the Archbishops of York. In this palace Charles I once took refuge; Cromwell besieged it, and quartered his cavalry in the Minster. The Green is an open grassy space; across it "Burgage Manor"[2] and Mrs.

[1] When Elze wrote in 1872, the population was a little larger—3500 as against 3161 to-day.

[2] Said to be the house occupied—in 1905—by Mrs. Birdmere (*Poems*, vii. 2).

Pigot's house faced one another. . . . Byron's first letter thence is dated March 22, 1804. He had arrived from Harrow that very day, and his mother having gone out to "an assembly", he seized the occasion to write to his half-sister, with whom since 1802 he had been on affectionate terms.

Augusta Mary Byron was born in 1783, according to most authorities, who state also that her mother died a year afterwards. Lord Lovelace, in *Astarte*, gives (in the list of dates appended to the volume) the year 1784 as that of her birth, and says that Lady Conyers died in the confinement. Augusta bore the courtesy title of the Honourable through her mother's barony of Conyers. The little girl lived with her father and stepmother while they were at Chantilly. Mrs. Byron brought her to London in 1788; but she was then (probably in view of the expected confinement) handed over to the care of her maternal grandmother, Lady Holderness,[1] and Mrs. Byron lost sight of her, for Lady Holderness would have nothing to do with the second wife of "Mad Jack". Until 1801, the year of her grandmother's death, Augusta was wholly estranged from her father's family. She lived with various maternal relatives until her marriage in 1807 with her first cousin, Colonel George Leigh, of the Tenth Dragoons, son of General Charles Leigh by Frances, daughter of Admiral Byron. But in 1801 Mrs. Byron wrote to her, condoling on the death of her grandmother, offering "to bury the past in *oblivion*", and recalling, pathetically enough, a severe childish illness through which she had nursed her. "These days you cannot remember, but I never

[1] She had been renowned as "the lovely Dutch girl" (daughter of a M. Doublette, of The Hague), and had married, in 1743, Robert d'Arcy, fourth and last Earl of Holderness. Their only child was that Marchioness of Carmarthen whom Jack Byron seduced.

will forget them". She added that her son was at Harrow, "and I have now no desire to keep you asunder".[1]

He did not delay to give Augusta his impressions of Southwell. On March 26, "my ever dear sister" hears of overwhelming dulness and ennui; Newstead is avoided, for the deadly and mysterious detestation of Lord Grey de Ruthyn is in full swing, and forms one among the many bones of contention with Mrs. Byron, who understands it no more than any one else. "My reasons will ever remain hidden in my own breast". By April 2, Southwell is "a horrid place"; there is "no society but old parsons and old maids"; he shoots a good deal, "but, thank God, I have not so far lost my reason as to make shooting my only amusement". Many of his neighbours do, "but they are only one degree removed from the brute creation". His mother's conversation, "though sometimes very *edifying*, is not always very *agreeable*". This is the first entrance of a theme which, in later letters, develops all too brilliantly. On April 9, he informs her that they are giving a party that night. "The principal *Southwell Belles* will be present, with one of which, although I don't as yet know whom I shall so far *honour*, *having never seen them*, I intend to fall violently in love". That will "at least have the charm of novelty to recommend it".

This party of Mrs. Byron's was probably the occasion of his first meeting with Elizabeth Pigot, who became the Egeria—wholly platonic—of later Southwell days. She thus described to Moore[2] their introduction.

[1] *L. and J.* i. 18.

[2] Moore, under the wing of the Rev. John Becher (another close friend of Byron), called on the Pigots to "collect material" on January 22, 1828. It was a curious, if an undesigned, coincidence that the date should have been that of Byron's birthday. The Pigots remarked on it: "he would to-day have been forty". Moore found Mrs. Pigot "a fine, intelligent old lady";

"He was so shy that [Mrs. Byron] was forced to send for him three times before she could persuade him to come into the drawing-room to play with the young people at a round game. He was then a fat, bashful boy with his hair combed straight over his forehead, and extremely like a miniature portrait that his mother had painted by M. de Chambruland. The next morning Mrs. Byron brought him to call at our house, when he still continued shy and formal in his manner. The conversation turned upon Cheltenham, where we had been staying, the amusements there, the plays, etc.; and I mentioned that I had seen the character of Gabriel Lackbrain[1] very well performed. His mother getting up to go, he accompanied her, making a formal bow, and I, in allusion to the play, said 'Good-bye, Gaby'. His countenance lighted up, his handsome mouth displayed a broad grin, all his shyness vanished, never to return, and, upon his mother's saying, 'Come, Byron, are you ready?'—no, she might go by herself, he would stay and talk a little longer; and from that moment, he used to come in and go out at all hours, as it suited him, and in our house considered himself perfectly at home".

The Byrons all suffered more or less from shyness, and he, though with the Pigot household it was cast aside, preserved for long his dread of strangers. He would jump out of the window to avoid visitors; he was often not less than rude to the other young men of the neighbourhood, and would leave their visits to him unreturned. But pride as well as shyness had something to do with this latter mode of behaviour. Sometimes

on parting, she kissed his hand most affectionately, and, with a compliment to his own renown, said that it was as the friend of Byron that she valued him most. "She seems unwilling to allow that he had a single fault" (*Diary of Thomas Moore*, v. 249).

[1] The character occurs in *Life*, a comedy of F. Reynolds (*L. and J.* i. 32).

the calls had been too long delayed; sometimes the ladies of the family had neglected to visit Mrs. Byron, whom we may easily suppose to have been a great deal talked about, and whose narrow means[1] put her at a disadvantage in hospitalities. Her son perceived the position, which is a common one in English provincial society: the County was putting on airs, and the Town was putting out feelers. There were many pleasant houses open to them both in the latter; the former disdained his mother, and would soon weary *him* with the field-sports which removed them so little from the brutes. He chose the Town; and having done so, soon cast off his misanthropy, was to be counted on for all gaieties, and felt mortified and angry if he were left out of any. Soon too (in the August of 1804) an agreeable tribute to that dubious social position offered itself. A strolling company of actors came to Southwell, and finding that a nobleman was living in the place, at once approached him for patronage. On August 8, he had the glory of attending at a performance "bespoke" by his mother and himself. We need not question his enjoyment: the patron, even at sixty, is perennially blissful. What must sixteen—and a sixteen that had suffered the scorns of the unworthy—have felt!

The principal people in Southwell were the Pigots, Leacrofts, Housons, and of course the clergyman, Mr. Becher. At the Pigots', as we have seen, Byron had a second home. There were sons and daughters, and Elizabeth, his friend, was, we gather, a good deal older

[1] She had been awarded, in 1799, a Civil List Pension—"on what grounds I know not", says Moore—of £300 a year. (This was afterwards reduced to £200, and at all times most irregularly paid.) During Byron's schooldays she received £500 a year from the Court of Chancery for his education. When he went to Cambridge, she gave up this allowance to him, and at the same time applied for a personal allowance of £200 a year, but in 1807 this had not yet been granted (*L. and J.* i. 76).

than her "Gaby".[1] His first letter to her—she kept all from him that she or her family ever had, and was the only one of his early correspondents who had the foresight to do so—is dated August 29, 1804, from Burgage Manor. She was evidently already devoted to his service—for she had done a book-plate for him, and was knitting him a watch-riband and a purse. Moore points out, in this letter, two characteristics. His punctuality in answering: "Your note was given me by Harry at the play . . . and now I have sat down to answer it before I go to bed"; and his love for simple ballad-music: "I shall be happy to hear you sing my favourite, 'The Maid of Lodi'". These two traits he "preserved unaltered during the remainder of his life". Of the choice in music we have already had an indication in the Mary Chaworth days, when "Mary Anne" was always pleaded for. He liked "Robin Adair" too, and he sang, with Elizabeth Pigot, many other naïve ditties. "It is very odd", he once said to her, "that I sing much better to your playing than to any one else's". "That", she answered, "is because I play to your singing". He probably sang very badly.

[1] The Pigots followed Byron's career with enthusiastic interest. Elizabeth "regarded it as the business of her life and heart to preserve his memory". She died in 1866, at a good old age, still in Southwell. Her eldest brother John, who was very intimate with Byron in 1806–7, lived until 1871, when he died at Ruddington, Notts, aged eighty-six. Harry Pigot, the younger brother, was Byron's godson—or, as they loved to say, "grandson". He entered the East India Company, and died in 1830. He was once on board a ship which suddenly sank, on the river Coosy—so suddenly that the only thing Pigot could save was the book he happened to be reading at the moment. It was a copy of the second impression of Byron's early poems—the small octavo of January 1807, entitled *Poems on Various Occasions*. Byron had given him a copy with this inscription: "Harry Edward Pigot: the gift of his grandfather, George Gordon Byron, 1807". When Pigot died, his daughter brought it back to England, "where, in September 1862, it formed the ornament of a bazaar on behalf of the volunteers in East Retford, and was sold by auction for £25" (Karl Elze, referring to *Notes and Queries*, November 1, 1862, p. 346).

Rogers[1] said that one could tell from a poet's versification whether he had an ear for music or not. "From Bowles's and Moore's I should know that they had fine ears . . . ; from Southey's, Wordsworth's, and Byron's, that they had no ears for it".

He did not spend the Christmas holidays of 1804–5 at Southwell, but in London with the Hansons.[2] This was arranged for him by Augusta, in consequence of the burning letters she had been getting for some time about his relations with his mother. "I dread the approach of the holidays", he wrote from Harrow in November. The sinister Lord Grey de Ruthyn seems to have been one reason for these aggravated terrors. He had called during the summer holidays, and there had been a scene. The boy would not see him; and Mrs. Byron was so inordinately angry that he began to suspect her of "a penchant for his lordship". "But I am confident that he does not return it. . . . She has an excellent opinion of her personal attractions, sinks her age a good six years, and avers that when I was born, she was only eighteen. . . . But vanity is the weakness of *your sex*",[3] sums up the youthful philosopher who was so wholly free from it; and he adds that he could forgive "these foibles", did not worse remain behind.

In this letter we hear the first of those cries of veritable anguish which ring through many belonging to the Southwell period. "Am I to call this woman mother? . . . am I to be goaded with insult, loaded with obloquy, and suffer my feelings to be outraged on the most trivial occasions? I owe her respect as a Son, but I renounce her as a Friend. What example

[1] *Table Talk*, pp. 224, 225.

[2] Be it remembered that this was the time of that crisis at Harrow when Dr. Drury wished him to leave the school.

[3] *L. and J.* i. 46.

does she show me! I hope in God I shall never follow it".[1] His own anger was of different calibre, for the worst rages were the "silent" ones; but his demeanour towards the unhappy woman, during these scenes, was of a very provocative kind. He would make her low, mocking bows, would listen with an interest burlesqued to insolence, as she screamed and choked out her abuse, her accusations, her indictments of the "Byrrones". She would then dash the household china to the ground, or catch up the poker and tongs and pursue him round the room; but for all his lameness, he could usually prevail against her slow-moving corpulency. Once, indeed, she did overtake him, brandishing her heavy cut-steel weapons, and in the madness of her fury his actual personal danger was supreme; but he contrived to evade the blow, and fled not only from the room but from the house. He went to the Pigots', and, with their connivance, escaped to London next day. She followed him there, and "after an obstinate engagement of some hours" (as he wrote to John Pigot), returned to Southwell, while he "proceeded with all my laurels, to Worthing, on the Sussex coast". . . . What scathing truths he spoke to her on that occasion we may imagine only if we know something of the feelings which such monstrous episodes (for they are nothing less) can generate. He might write, and he did write, pages of vivid satire, and of invective, and of lamentation, to his sister and his friends; but what he must have felt at heart was something bitterer than any form of utterance could express. "Such scenes", wrote Augusta Byron to Hanson, "are enough to spoil the very best

[1] A painful, yet farcical, story (vouched for by Moore) is told of one of these encounters. Late one evening, Byron went to their chemist and begged him on no account to supply Mrs. Byron with the means for suicide. He had scarcely left the shop, before his mother entered—not to buy the poison, but to make the same request about her son.

temper and disposition in the universe".[1] The sense of irreplaceable ignorance of one deep emotion—a son's love for a mother—that he could never truly feel; the sense of personal degradation, and of almost open shame (there are phrases, here and in later letters, that hint at Mrs. Byron's intemperance); and possibly the abominable sense of actual physical fear . . . these must have mingled into wretchedness inexpressible—though so dazzlingly, so irresistibly expressed! For with aching heart though we must read his Southwell letters, we must read them with laughing lips as well. The traits are so lifelike, the picture drawn with a *brio* so amazing, that sheer pleasure in the thing well done brings the light of exultation to our eyes. We lie back and laugh, for all our pity—because we know that he must have done the same, because genius cannot show us its vast compensations without awakening the old, the ever-new, delight in that "glory, jest, and riddle" which is Man.

He left Harrow, as we have seen, in July 1805, and on the first day of that month entered himself at Trinity College, Cambridge, though he did not go into residence until the following October. The interval was spent at Southwell, "which . . . I wish was swallowed up by an earthquake"; but though unhappy to think he was "no longer a boy", inevitably he was looking forward to the life in which he would be, for the first time, his own master. That life will be dealt with later; at present the sojourns at Southwell claim our attention. He spent a year there in 1806–7, from one June to the next; it was a retreat from the University rendered desirable, even indispensable, by his extravagance.

The great scene of the Flight from the Fireirons

[1] *L. and J.* i. 46.

took place in the August of this stay. "Oh! for the pen of Ariosto to rehearse, in epic, the scolding of that momentous eve—or rather, let me invoke the shade of Dante to inspire me, for none but the author of the *Inferno* could properly preside over such an attempt. . . . What a group!—Mrs. B. the principal figure; *you* cramming your ears with cotton, as the only antidote to total deafness; Mrs. —— in vain endeavouring to mitigate the wrath of the lioness robbed of her whelp; and last, though not least, Elizabeth and *Wousky*—wonderful to relate!—both deprived of their parts of speech, and bringing up the rear in mute astonishment". This letter is to John Pigot, thanking him for his "amusing narrative of the last proceedings of my amiable Alecto", and is dated from 16 Piccadilly. Next day came "the engagement of some hours" with his mother; on the 18th (she having returned to Southwell), Byron went on to Worthing and Littlehampton, begging Pigot to send "that *idle scoundrel* Charles" after him with his horses; and in September, after a victorious flying visit to Burgage Manor, Byron and John Pigot went to Harrogate together. Both were delightfully busy with "poetics", and with a project for amateur theatricals at Southwell. They were shy and reclusive; yet they no doubt attracted attention in Harrogate, "extremely full" though the place still was; for they had arrived in "Lord Byron's own carriage with post-horses; and he sent his groom with two saddle-horses, and a beautifully formed, very ferocious bull-mastiff, called Nelson, to meet us there". The groom was the idle scoundrel Charles; and there was a valet, Frank, as well, who went on the box of the carriage, "with Boatswain beside him".[1] Boatswain the

[1] From a letter written by John Pigot to his sister; and from his account given verbally to Moore in 1828.

MRS. BYRON

FROM THE PAINTING BY THOMAS STEWARDSON IN THE POSSESSION OF MR. JOHN MURRAY

Newfoundland is, as Henley said, "one of the world's dogs", and will reappear in this narrative; poor Nelson ended his tempestuous days during the Harrogate sojourn.

Byron and Pigot were at the Crown Inn—dining nightly in its public room, but retiring immediately afterwards to their private one, "for Byron was no more a friend to drinking than myself. We lived retired, and made few acquaintance, for he was naturally shy, *very* shy; which people who did not know him mistook for pride. Few people", adds John Pigot, "understood Byron, but I know that he had naturally a kind and feeling heart, and that there was not a single spark of malice in his composition".

He had been nearly a year in residence at Cambridge when this visit to Harrogate took place, so that we behold the young man "launched", as it were: private carriage, two men-servants, two saddle-horses—Sultan and Brighton ("universally admired", says Pigot, to whom the latter was lent)—and two notable dogs. "Poetics" were in full swing, and the Pigots and Mr. Becher were in the secret; the first quarto was indeed actually in the press, but, strange to say, the more absorbing interest of the moment seems to have been the projected theatricals. "They were", says Moore, "a source of infinite delight to him", while the excitement at Southwell was, of course, intense.

They started in good time for the rehearsals from Harrogate, and the journey was beguiled by the composition of the Prologue. "On getting into the carriage at Chesterfield, Byron said, 'Now, Pigot, I'll spin a prologue for our play'"; and before they reached Mansfield, he had spun it, with but one interruption: "How do you pronounce *début*?" Reinforced by Pigot's opinion, he exclaimed, "Aye, that will do for a rhyme

to *new*"; leaving us to ponder (for the deed was perpetrated) on the teaching of French—or "rhyme"—in those days.

The great event came off in the end of September, at Mr. Leacroft's, "whose drawing-room was converted into a neat theatre for the occasion", and whose pretty daughter, Julia, played a part in the first piece. The plays were Cumberland's *Wheel of Fortune*, and Allingham's *Weathercock*. Byron's parts in both were the star parts. He repeatedly brought down the house; and it was either very odd, or very natural, that the pair of characters should figure his own renowned duality, for Penruddock in the *Wheel*, was gloom incarnate, while Tristram in the *Weathercock*, was the embodiment of whim—a Hawtrey part, as we should say to-day. Mr. Becher had written the Epilogue, and Byron spoke it. Moore gives a grossly exaggerated account of his wonderful mimicry of the performers in this.[1] Only one word (says Mr. Prothero) gave any opportunity, and in that word, "sister", the speaker did "take off exactly the voice and manner of Mr. R. Leacroft".

The memorable evening had consequences, and unpleasant ones. We have seen that Miss Julia Leacroft played a girl's part in the *Wheel of Fortune*, probably that of Penruddock's *inamorata*. Byron stayed in Southwell during the ensuing winter,[2] and it is clear that the mimic passion was prolonged. Southwell soon began to gossip; and on the last day of January there is a note to Julia's brother, Captain John Leacroft, which proves that the girl's menkind had grown

[1] See Moore's *Life*, p. 39 (1838), and *Letters and Journals*, i. 118.

[2] Despite his assertion (*Poems*, i. 38) that he never passed a winter there, we find letters dated from Southwell on December 7, 1806, and through the January and February of 1807.

uneasy. Moore[1] stated that the brother sent Byron a challenge, but that is inaccurate; Mr. Prothero thinks that probably Mr. Becher advised him to write as he did to Captain Leacroft. What he wrote was that the only way, so far as he could see, of "crushing the animadversions of officious malevolence" was for him to "decline all further intercourse with those whom my acquaintance has unintentionally injured". This was agreed to by the Leacrofts—and another pretext afforded for Byron's hearty hatred of Southwell. Most of us would find such an one irresistible. He was evidently the "talk of the town" at this time, and he was, as evidently, ready for any diversion that the young ladies of it could supply. Miss Julia Leacroft and Miss Anne Houson were the rival belles. Julia was first in the field; their flirtation dated from before the theatricals, as the earliest set of verses addressed to her in 1806 attests. They are affronting—not to say insulting—in tone.

> "Sixteen was then our utmost age,
> Two years have lingering passed away, love!
> And now new thoughts our minds engage,
> At least, I feel disposed to stray, love!"

Few families would take that quietly, for Miss Leacroft was unmistakably designated; and so we have seen that, whether "disposed to stray" or not, the young man was obliged to take his impertinences elsewhere. He took them—and took them in full force—to Miss Anne Houson, who inspired no less than six "poems". She was the daughter of a clergyman, and she married a clergyman.[2] Evidently very beautiful, she was very

[1] Not in the Life of Byron, but in the *Prose and Verse of Thomas Moore*, edited by Richard Herne Shepherd (London, 1878), p. 420, is this reference to be found.

[2] The Rev. Luke Jackson. She died on Christmas Day 1821, and her monument is in Hucknall Torkard church.

vain as well, and given to boasting of her many conquests. A truly awful warning was addressed to her on this count in January 1807.

> "Dost thou repeat, in childish boast,
> The words man utters to deceive?
> Thy peace, thy hope, thy all, is lost,
> If thou canst venture to believe". . . .

This, from nineteen, is surely one of the most humorous adjurations which that much-adjured being, Woman, has ever received. But Anne never saw it, for it was not published until 1832.

Meanwhile the calm current of his friendship with Elizabeth Pigot flowed on—a part of the routine of life. He had settled down into a groove—he could often do that, as we shall see; and Southwell favoured such regularities. Not that his were wholly in the cathedral-town tradition. He was a sluggard, for instance, of the incorrigible hereditary type. Mrs. Byron could never be got out of bed at a decent hour, and her son followed her example—to the end of his life, be it said. He wrote at night, and the Muse was gracious; every morning he had a sheaf of "poetics" to carry down to Elizabeth, who acted as his amanuensis. Thence he would proceed to Mr. Becher's, and after that would look in on the Housons or Leacrofts (before "the animadversions of officious malevolence", of course); and after this lounging sort of morning, he would devote himself to his "favourite exercises". These were swimming, sparring, firing at a mark, and riding. Oddly enough, he still played cricket; there is a letter from Elizabeth to John Pigot in which she says: "Lord Byron has just gone past the window with his bat on his shoulder to cricket, which he is as fond of as ever". But swimming and diving were real proficiencies. A lady in Southwell, when Moore was writing the

biography, still kept as a precious relic a thimble which Byron borrowed from her one morning, and which her brother (who was his companion) testified to his having brought up three times successively from the bottom of the river. To dive in the little Grete, which ran through Southwell, was probably child's play to one of Cambridge's most renowned performers—for Byron and his friend Noel Long were brilliant rivals, and used to practise in a part where the Cam is fourteen feet deep. "From its by no means crystal waters", says Elze, "they were wont to bring up plates and eggs and even shillings"—so the tiny thimble in the tiny Grete was quite in the manner of the expert.

Byron's riding was never remarkable, nor did he ever acquire true horsiness. A spirited pair passed by his window one day. "What beautiful horses!" he exclaimed. "I should like to buy them". "Why, they are your own, my lord", said a servant who was present.

He inherited—or imitated—from the Wicked Lord a passion for weapons of all kinds. His pistol was as dear to him as most men make their pipes; and beside his bed there lay always a small sword with which he used to amuse himself, when he awoke, by thrusting it through the hangings. The tattered condition of these added a high value to the bed when Mrs. Byron sold it on her removal to Newstead; for the purchaser, avid of drama, loved to persuade herself and all her acquaintances that the sword was the very one which had killed Mr. Chaworth in the famous duel. It was not; but an innocent and stainless weapon, which did not even belong to Byron, for he used to borrow it from a friend during his visits to Southwell.

Despite his detestation of the place, he left many endearing memories behind him. Not to reckon the ever-devoted attachment of the Pigots, there were

humbler celebrants of his warm heart and quick, picturesque generosity. Moore tells a charming little tale of a poor woman who came into the bookseller's shop one day to buy a Bible. Byron was present, and overheard the colloquy between her and the shopman. The cost proved to be beyond her means: it was eight shillings. "Ah, dear sir", she cried, "I cannot pay such a price; I did not think it would be half the money"; and she was going away, much cast down, when the boy (for this was in the early days of durance) called her back, bought the Bible, and made her a present of it. The incident counted as a good omen through the day, for he was at that time (and indeed all through life) very superstitious—like his mother, who was steeped in the lore of second-sight, had ever haunted fortune-tellers, and could reel off tale after tale of occult faculties and presentiments. A lady in Southwell told Moore an amusing anecdote of the lighter side of this trait in Byron. She had a large agate bead with a wire through it in her work-box, and when he asked what the strange object might be, she told him that it was a charm against love, and that as long as she had it she was immune from that malady. "Oh, give it to me", he cried, "it's just what I want". She refused; but ere long found herself bereft of the bead. "Did you take it?" she asked, and he confessed that he had, adding that she should never see it again. A little flirtation may have been mingled with this theft; but Mary Chaworth, in whose epoch it took place, most probably was accountable for his desire to be protected against love.

So, half-fledged as man and as poet, he left Southwell behind him in the June of 1807. His last letter to Elizabeth Pigot is dated October 26, 1807, and though it closes with the adjuration, "Write, write, write!!!"

she plainly got no answers if she did. He was "grown-up" then, and life was branching out in many directions. The early poems had attracted some notable attention; he was making friends at the University among men of his own standing, brilliant, dissipated, sceptical—"young pridelings of intellect" (to use the delightful phrase of Dallas); and John Pigot, the steady young provincial doctor, was receding into a dim background. The final sojourn in Southwell had been enforced by circumstances which he thus described to Hanson: "The fact is, I remain here because I can appear nowhere else, being *completely done up*. *Wine* and *Women* have *dished* your humble servant, not a *Sou* to be had; all *over*; condemned to exist (I cannot say live) at this *Crater* of Dullness till my *Lease* of *Infancy* expires".[1] And Elizabeth Pigot, wise and humorous, must for long have been aware that the end of her close intercourse with "Gaby" was approaching. With that want of tact, of any perception of, or care for, their probable feelings, which was one of the constant defects in Byron's attitude towards women, he had now adopted a tone in his letters to her which a girl of spirit and intelligence can scarcely have found agreeable. He would rather "visit the Pit of Acheron than contaminate his sandals with the polluted dust of Southwell". "To *forget* and be forgotten by the people of Southwell is all I aspire to". And when, leaving Cambridge, he went to London, the poor Egeria had to endure being told that the news of the "metropolis" could not be interesting to *her*, "who had rusticated all her life", and had "insulated ideas of decorum". By August the note of patronage had grown still more strident, and was mingled with a lamentable note of bragging. "A man whose works are praised by *reviewers*, admired by *duchesses*, and sold by every

[1] *L. and J.* i. 126.

bookseller of the metropolis, does not dedicate much consideration to *rustic readers*". The letter closes with what in those days would have been called a "handsome tribute" to her steady and devoted friendship; but he was plainly forgetting, and, inevitable as the Pigots must have known this to be, such driftings apart bring pain and mortification into hearts as kindly, and lives as monotonous, as theirs. Mrs. Pigot — not Elizabeth—and John were each to hear once more, in 1811; but these messages merely emphasised the distance between the past and the present; and we see the very end of the end in a word to his mother before starting for the Albanian tour in 1809. "I wish the Miss Pigots had something better to do than carry my miniatures to Nottingham to copy".[1]

[1] What was not good enough for himself, however, was good enough for Dallas, his friend, connection, and "literary agent" in later days; for we find him in a letter of October 11, 1811, cordially recommending the "Crater of Dullness" as a place in which to settle down. Dallas's family would "have the advantage of very genteel society"; and Byron had "friends there to whom I should be proud to introduce you". Dallas did not act on the advice, but went (at that time) to live at Mortlake, Surrey (see Byron's Will of 1811, *L. and J.* i. 329).

CHAPTER VI

CAMBRIDGE—1805–1808

Dejection — College life — Edward Noel Long — The "Thinning Campaign"—"Thomas Little" and Strangford—Edleston—Byron's lack of originality—His dissipations—Pugilism and fencing: Jackson and Angelo—John Cam Hobhouse; William Bankes; Charles Skinner Matthews; Scrope Berdmore Davies — Leaves Cambridge — Financial affairs—The statue at Trinity College

HE "went up" to Cambridge in the October of 1805, feeling miserable. To go there at all had been a great disappointment. He had chosen Oxford, but there proved to be no vacancy at Christ Church, the desired college—and moreover, Dr. Drury strongly recommended Cambridge, which had been his own university. Byron acquiesced, but the decision was unfortunate. Oxford would have suited him better—being, as some one has amusingly said, "not a mere receptacle for youth, like Cambridge". There, too, he might have read for Honours, while at Cambridge the rule then prevailed that Honours were only for mathematicians—and Byron as a mathematician is unthinkable. But Elze maintains that neither would Oxford have suited him: "his mind, with its universal tendency, could never be attracted by either of the two centres"; and Moore, more wordily, has much the same judgment to deliver. It is probably a just one. He was impatient, wilful, avid of experience—that is not the stuff of which scholars are made.

In his diary he recorded the mood of dejection in which he entered University life. "I was so completely alone in this new world that it half broke my spirits. . . . It was one of the deadliest and heaviest feelings of my life that I was no longer a boy". Yet with him to Cambridge went an old and dear Harrow intimate, that Edward Noel Long who was the "Cleon" of *Childish Recollections*, "honest, open, generous"; they lived in close intercourse until the summer of 1806;[1] and in the Ravenna Journal of 1821 he spoke of that time as "the happiest, perhaps, days of my life". In November 1805, he wrote to Augusta in enthusiastic praise of college life: "I like it extremely . . . most pleasantly situated in Super-excellent Rooms"—in Trinity College; and "allowed £500 a year, a Servant and Horse, so feel as independent as a German Prince who coins his own Cash, or a Cherokee Chief who coins no Cash at all, but enjoys what is more precious, Liberty. I talk in raptures of that *Goddess* because my amiable Mama was so despotic".[2] The initiatory melancholy, then, seems to have quickly disappeared; but with closer knowledge his critical spirit awoke, and he poured contempt on the place. "It is the *Devil* or at least his principal residence. They call it the University, but any other appellation would have suited it better, for Study is the last pursuit of the Society; the Master[3] eats, drinks, and sleeps, the Fellows *drink, dispute, and*

[1] Long was Byron's companion in the visits to Littlehampton and Worthing, which followed the Flight from the Fireirons and from Southwell in that August; he left college then, went into the Guards, and was drowned early in 1809 on his passage to Lisbon with his regiment.

[2] *L. and J.* i. 81.

[3] William Lort Mansel, then Master of Trinity, was the chief wit of Cambridge in his day. Rogers wished that somebody would collect his epigrams; "they are remarkably neat and clever". As Master, he was a severe disciplinarian and extremely tenacious of his dignity (*L. and J.* i. note to p. 84).

pun; the employment of the Undergraduates you will probably conjecture without any description".

Long, at Harrow, had been a milder spirit than Byron, but now (as Byron said) either Long had roughened or he had softened, for they met on equal terms of behaviour. They were rival swimmers, "fond of riding—reading—and of conviviality". The last they seem to have abjured in their own dual intercourse. When we read the tale of their *tête-à-tête* evenings, we mentally exclaim that it must indeed have been Byron who had "softened". They spent the hours in music, Long performing on the violoncello or the flute, and his friend meekly doing audience, to the accompaniment of "our chief beverage, soda-water"! The depressive drink was, however, part of a régime—certainly in Byron's case, probably in Long's; for this was the earliest period of the great Thinning Campaign which lasted all the former's life. We have already seen that a tendency to put on flesh—to become, indeed, as Moore frankly expresses it, "enormously fat"—had for some time worried him; now that he was growing vain of his looks, solicitous about the "becoming arrangement of his hair" and so forth, that tendency had become a haunting horror against which he fought untiringly. His letters from Cambridge are threaded with allusions to it; and always he was able to announce his triumph—always he was "*thinner*", and thinner was always gleefully underlined.

The young anchorites of vanity solaced themselves mentally for this bodily discipline. "I remember our buying, with vast alacrity, Moore's new quarto[1] (in 1806) and reading it together in the evenings".

[1] This was the *Epistles, Odes, and other Poems*; but Byron was already a confirmed reader of "Thomas Little". In later years he often used the "Little" volumes as texts for the hypocrisy of that public which refused to accept *Don Juan*.

> "'Tis LITTLE! young Catullus of his day,
> As sweet, but as immoral in his Lay!
> Grieved to condemn, the Muse must needs be just,
> Nor spare melodious advocates of lust".

"Strangford's Camoëns"[1] was another much-read book, and this poet was to be, in the future, still more stringently rebuked.

> "Mend, Strangford, mend thy morals and thy taste.
> Be warm, but pure; be amorous, but be chaste:
> Cease to deceive; thy pilfered harp restore,
> Nor teach the Lusian bard to copy Moore".

But whatever the young satirist-moralist of 1809 might say, we may be sure that the soda-water drinkers of 1806 found Little and Strangford a good deal more to their taste than the austere refreshment which stood, chillingly, within reach of their infrequent hands.

Another friendship ran alongside this. In July 1807, Byron wrote to Elizabeth Pigot of one who "has been my *almost constant* associate since October 1805. His *voice* first attracted my attention, his *countenance* fixed it, and his *manners* attached me to him for ever". He was a young man named Edleston, who was one of the Cambridge choristers: two years younger than Byron, "nearly my height, very *thin*, very fair complexion, dark eyes, and light locks". Their acquaintance (as another friend[2] has recorded in a MS. note) began by his saving Edleston from drowning. The key was thus dramatically set for a kind of relation which, in its departure from a normal

[1] *Translations from the Portuguese of Luis de Camoëns*, by Lord Strangford. The "translations" were not translations; "no more to be found in the original Portuguese than in the Song of Solomon" (Byron's note to *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers. Poems*, i. 320).

[2] The Rev. William Harness, whom Byron (at Harrow) had pitied and protected. Harness was, after Byron had left Cambridge, at Christ's College.

choice of intimates, was (in youth, at any rate) profoundly characteristic of him. The paradoxical nature of these dual types of intercourse—that with "men of my own rank" (a too favourite phrase) and men, like Edleston, of no social rank at all—is more apparent than real. Each has its origin in the constant consciousness of that "own rank" from which Byron suffered so much more than do the generality of lordlings. It was born of the long poverty and disclassment, and kept alive, we may conjecture, by the perpetual sense of Mrs. Byron's irrelevancy as the mother of an "old English Baron". These things, making self-assertion often necessary, pushed forward in his mind a circumstance usually unapparent by reason of the very atmosphere of recognition which surrounds it.

At any rate, the Edleston friendship became a very sentimental one. The chorister gave him a cornelian heart as a keepsake:

> "He offer'd it with downcast look,
> As *fearful* that I might refuse it;
> I told him, when the gift I took,
> My *only fear* should be, to lose it".

Byron was so careful not to lose it that he entrusted it to Elizabeth Pigot to keep for him; and in 1807, writing to her about the "hero of *my cornelian*", he propounded a fantastic scheme for living with Edleston when he should come of age. If it was carried out, they were to "put the 'Ladies of Llangollen' to the blush".[1] . . .

[1] These were Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Sarah Ponsonby, who lived together in the Vale of Llangollen for upwards of half a century. They were immensely talked of and run after; there was "no person of rank, talent, and importance", said John Murray in a letter to his son in 1829 (*Memoir of John Murray*, ii. 304), "who did not procure introductions to them". Charles Mathews saw "the dear inseparable inimitables" in the theatre at Oswestry in 1820. "They came twelve miles from Llangollen, and returned, as they never sleep from home. . . . Oh, such curiosities! As they are seated, there is not one point to distinguish them from men. . . .

It never was carried out, nor even attempted. Whether the friends met again at all is indeed uncertain; no further mention of Edleston occurs until 1811. In the May of that year he died of consumption. Byron wrote at once to Mrs. Pigot, asking for the return of the cornelian, which he now had a confused memory of having *given* to Elizabeth. In this belief he expressed himself very apologetically, promising to replace the keepsake, and adding, "you may tell her that the giver died at the age of twenty-one, making the *sixth*, within four months, of friends and relatives that I have lost between May and the end of August". The cornelian was returned at once; he was reminded that he had left it as a deposit, not as a gift; but it was returned —broken.[1] The omen haunted him for long.

Byron, in the Ravenna Diary of 1821, thus summed up the emotional content of this summer of 1806. "[Long's] friendship, and a violent, though *pure*, love and passion—which held me at that period—were the then romance of the most romantic period of my life". It is noteworthy that in all his revocations of the days

They look exactly like two respectable superannuated clergymen. . . . I was highly flattered, as they never were in the theatre before". Lady Eleanor died in June 1829; Miss Ponsonby survived her until December 1831.

[1] There is a theory, held by a few commentators, that the mysterious group of *Thyrza* poems refers to Edleston. I cannot find anything which accounts for it, either in the poems themselves, or in the stanzas in canto ii. of *Childe Harold* (9 and 95–96 which Byron himself expressly related to the first *Thyrza* poem. By his manner of doing so, he removed (one would have thought) all possibility of such a theory ever coming into existence. See the letters to Dallas of October 14 and 31, 1811 (*L. and J.* ii. pp. 57 and 65). In the former he says, ". . . this stanza" (No. 9. of canto ii.) "alludes to an event which has taken place since my arrival here, and not to the death of any *male* friend". But great are the ingenuities of the commentator! In *Astarte*, we read that he occasionally spoke of Thyrza to Lady Byron, "always with strong but concealed emotion". He once showed her a beautiful tress of hair which he said was Thyrza's, but he never mentioned her real name (p. 138).

at Cambridge there is no explicit allusion to the once beloved Edleston.

He showed no originality in his mode of life at college. What all the rest did, he did—neither more nor less, neither better nor worse; and that, I think, is the mark of Byron which best helps to explain him. Wholly incapable as he was in youth of any real originality in the conduct of the daily round, yet with a native impulse to scorn the multitude developed by every circumstance, hereditary and accidental, of his being, he kicked, as it were, for ever against the pricks of his own uninventiveness. We watch frequently such a struggle: Byron is its great epitome. The sense of what genuine originality signifies is slow to dawn in natures like his; a fitful eccentricity in trifles (such as he often achieved) masquerades for them as the trait which carries with it their admired privilege of disdain. They do not see that true originality is unaware of itself, and embroiders no tag of scorn on its banner. Thus, for example, Byron's dearest freak at Cambridge was the keeping of a tame bear "to sit for a fellowship". The dullard of his year could have done and said as brilliantly. . . . For the rest, it was an aimless oscillation between the University and London—entirely "alone" in the sense of enjoying any vestige of domesticity, for it may be said almost without qualification that there was not a single private house which he could enter as an intimate. His guardian stood aloof; with the Hansons his relations were at that time often strained; Augusta Byron was scarcely ever in London; while to go home was to go to purgatory.

The result was the inevitable one. "I took my gradations in the vices with great promptitude . . . but though my temperament was naturally burning, I could not share in the commonplace libertinism of the place and time without disgust. And yet this very disgust,

and my heart thrown back upon itself, threw me into excesses perhaps more fatal than those from which I shrunk, as fixing upon one (at a time) the passions which, spread amongst many, would have hurt only myself".[1] Is not that the very struggle of which I spoke but now? And we see this the more clearly when we scan the record of that period's passion, and the "one (at a time)" upon whom it was fixed. He told Medwin that he used to dress up a certain Mrs. ——, and pass her off as his brother Gordon, "in order that my mother might not hear of my having such a female companion". She lived with him in Brompton lodgings, and they went to Brighton for "week-ends"—she riding about there in her male attire. Somebody, whose name Moore gives as "the late Lady P . . .", met them, and remarked on the beauty of her horse. "Yes", she answered, "it was *gave* me by my brother". Already (by Moore's account) suspicious, Lady P . . . must have offered an interesting study in expression as she lent an ear to the English of Lord Byron's "brother".[2]

Other delights were pugilism and fencing, and here he was blessed by the accident of time, for the chief exponents of both arts were of an unusually good type. John Jackson, better known as Gentleman Jackson, was just then the "sole prop and ornament of pugilism". "For over thirty years", says Henley in his notes to the one volume of Letters with which he dealt—notes which are at their most vivid in describing "the Fancy" —"[Jackson] was the most picturesque and commanding figure in the sporting-world, and exercised an influence unique in its annals. The truth is, he was a vast deal more than an accomplished boxer and teacher of boxing and a brilliant all-round athlete. He was also a man of

[1] *Detached Thoughts. L. and J.* v. 445.

[2] The affair lasted, for in 1808 the lady was taken on a visit to Newstead.

character and integrity—polite, agreeable, reputable, a capital talker, a person of tact and energy and charm".

In 1806 this paragon had rooms at 13 Bond Street with Henry Angelo, the equally remarkable fencing-master, and they formed "the most attractive lounge in the West End". Angelo was even more popular than the "Emperor of Pugilism". He had dined at the same table with the Prince of Wales, acted with Lord Barrymore, played the flute to Lady Melfort's accompaniment. His acquaintance with Byron had begun at Harrow. "From his lordship's affability and pleasant manners, I knew more of him than of many I attended there at the time". So the fencing-master wrote in his Reminiscences in 1830.[1] On one occasion, "his lordship" drove Angelo down to Cambridge—Theodore Hook being of the party—gave him dinner, saw him and Hook to the coach, and "sent to St. John's College for the good beer it was noted for, when, filling two tumblers, he handed them up himself to us, laughing at the many people who were wondering at his being so very busy waiting on the outside passengers".

By this time, in the development of the liberty which they at first had touched with so gingerly a hand, Byron's and Long's evenings at Cambridge had quite forgotten the flute and the soda-water. But Long left after the summer of 1806; and when Byron came back from his year's sojourn at Southwell, he made a new set of friends. One of these was John Cam Hobhouse,[2] destined to remain his close and unchanging intimate and ally through

[1] Angelo collected portraits of pugilists and players, and made a screen with these for Byron. "John Murray the Second bought it at the sale in Piccadilly, and it abides in Albemarle Street to this day" (W. E. Henley).

[2] He was the eldest son of Mr. Benjamin Hobhouse, created a baronet in 1812. In 1851, John Cam Hobhouse was created Baron Broughton de Gyfford. He died in 1869.

all that was to come. Hobhouse had cherished a keen dislike for him during the first two years at Cambridge. He also was at Trinity; and the young man in the white hat and grey coat, riding a grey horse, who was George Gordon, sixth Lord Byron, had been one of his pet prejudices. They had become acquainted, had even got drunk together, but Hobhouse had remained "orbed in his isolation" for all other modes of intercourse. In 1807, however, there came an expansion. The offensively dressed and mounted youth had published a volume of poetry. This hinted at better things than those more immediately apparent, and Lord Byron was graciously admitted to intimacy: "We became really friends in a morning".

William Bankes[1] was gone—he who had originally brought them together, but had suffered the frustration of Hobhouse's caprice. Bankes himself may possibly have distressed this meticulous censor a little. While he stayed, he had "ruled the roast—or rather the *roasting* —and was father of all mischiefs"; he had been Byron's "collegiate pastor, and master, and patron", and had done his best to popularise him; but those were the days of that shyness which beset all Byrons in the beginning of relationships, and Bankes had finally resigned himself to "tolerating my ferocities". By 1807 these had died down, and there was, moreover, a good opening for intimacy with the dazzling Charles Skinner Matthews, who had occupied Byron's rooms at Trinity during the Southwell sojourn.

Two circumstances of his tenancy had delighted this marvellous youth. On his taking possession of the rooms, Mr. Jones, the tutor, had urged upon him a

[1] Bankes became celebrated as a traveller, explorer, and discoverer. "Bankes has done miracles of research and enterprise", wrote Byron in 1820 to John Murray.

great solicitude for the furniture, "for Lord Byron, Sir, is a young man of tumultuous passions". The enchanted Matthews thenceforward enjoined his friends to handle the very door with caution—and Jones's voice and manner (he was famed for his oddity) were faithfully reproduced in the corollary: "Lord Byron, Sir, is a young man . . ." The door safely passed, visitors found themselves before a large looking-glass, and this —evidently a rare luxury—so distracted their minds by its generous and flattering reflections that Matthews soon complained that they "did not come to see him, but themselves". The stage was thus set for friendliness, and "Matthews and I . . . became great cronies". Byron had a very high enthusiasm for the starry Charles. Over and over again it sounds in his letters; and in a note to stanza 91 (canto i.) of *Childe Harold*, he expressed it with a humility which caused another friend to protest. "I should have ventured a verse to the memory of the late Charles Skinner Matthews, Fellow of Downing College,[1] Cambridge, were he not too much above all praise of mine". Dallas (the friend in question) thought this excessive, but Byron answered, "I was so sincere . . . and do feel myself so totally unable to do justice to his talents, that the passage must stand. . . . To him all the men I ever knew were pigmies. He was an intellectual giant. It is true I loved Wingfield better[2] . . . but in ability—ah! you did not know Matthews". And again, "None of us ever thought of being at all near him".

To the influence of this potent spirit Dallas ascribed Byron's "infidelity". Matthews was a pronounced sceptic, and a master of ironic japes as well;

[1] This honour fell to Matthews in 1808.

[2] Wingfield's death was commemorated in the stanza to which the note in question was attached.

the two minds, once any kind of intimacy began, were of necessity drawn together by their close intellectual affinity—they "spoke the same language", in short. The undoubted influence which Matthews had, consisted in that affinity; he originated no scepticism in Byron, who had from boyhood abjured any orthodoxy in religious belief. Moreover (for all the ardent admiration), with this friend the chiefest spell was not at work: Matthews did not inspire Byron's love. "I did not love him so much as I honoured him; I was indeed so sensible of his infinite superiority that though I did not envy, I stood in awe of it".

Another member of the "Byron Set" was that Scrope Berdmore Davies whose name occurs so often not only in Byron's letters and journals, but in all social chronicles of the time. "One of the cleverest men I ever knew, in conversation. . . . Scrope was always ready, and often witty". So wrote Byron in the Ravenna Journal; but Davies belongs more intimately to his later life in London, when the clubs and gambling-dens saw him oftener than during the Cambridge period. At the University they counted for one another more as rival swimmers and divers than as anything else; and, criticising Matthews's less expert performances, "always told him that he would be drowned if ever he came to a difficult pass in the water".

Byron took his M.A. degree on July 4, 1808, and ended then his living connection with the University. He thus summed up his feelings in a letter to Harness of March 18, 1809: "*Alma Mater* was to me *injusta noverca*; and the old beldam only gave me my M.A. degree because she could not avoid it". He acknowledged, however, in another letter to the same correspondent, that he was "but an untoward child himself". If idleness and

absence be claims on the affection of an *Alma Mater*, Cambridge might have loved him—but not otherwise; for though in his inveterate vein, he exaggerated the degree of his dissipations, the amount of them must have been considerable to plunge him in the slough of financial difficulties wherein he weltered (and caused his mother to welter) from almost the earliest days of his undergraduate life. He said in his first letter to Augusta from Trinity that his allowance—£500 a year—was one of the best in college. This, which Mrs. Byron received from the Court of Chancery for his education, she yielded wholly to him when he went to Cambridge; and Chancery further sanctioned the expenditure of a certain sum for furniture, clothes, plate, and so forth. But he had not been in residence a month before Hanson received a letter: "As the time of paying my Bills now approaches, the remaining £50 will be very agreeable. You need not make any deduction, as I shall want most of it; I will settle with you for the Saddle and Accoutrements *next* quarter".[1] This letter is of November 23; on November 30, in reading his answer to Hanson's answer, we find ourselves whirled into the midst of a tornado of wrath. It arose from a misunderstanding of what the solicitor had said, but the form of nervous irritation which produces such unreasoned attacks belongs peculiarly to the spendthrift. Hanson remonstrated and explained; the fifty pounds were sent; but by December a further crisis was imminent. He wrote to Augusta, at the end of the year, asking her to "go security"—joint-security of course with him—for £800. "One of the money-lending tribe" had offered to advance it. He applied to her because—because he could think of no one else. His friends were in the same boat as himself, or if any were not, he was "too proud to apply,

[1] *L. and J.* i. 85.

for he hated obligation"; his relations she knew he "*detested*". She must not breathe a word to that "proud Grandee the Earl", nor to "that Chattering puppy Hanson". She evidently consented to go security, for in February 1806, he wrote to his mother to say that he had "paid his *Harrow* debts" and college-bills, and "happened to have a few Hundreds in ready cash by him".

Poor Mrs. Byron had spent weeks of anguish. On January 11, she had written to tell Hanson that the bills were coming in thick upon her to double the amount she had expected; "he went and ordered just what he pleased here, and in London. However", she continued, "it is of no use to say anything about it, and I beg you will take no notice. I am determined to have everything clear within the year if possible". The news of the "few Hundreds in ready cash" alarmed her. "Where can he get Hundreds? . . . My idea is that he has inveigled himself with some woman that he wishes to get rid of and finds it difficult. . . . He has no feeling, no Heart. This I have long known . . . this bitter truth I can no longer conceal; it is wrung from me by *heart-rending agony*".[1]

She had, indeed, a sufficiently unlovable letter before her. It was the February of 1806, and already he wished to leave college, and "pass a couple of years abroad". He "presumed" she would agree, but he was going whether she did or not. He was remaining in town a month longer, when perhaps he would bring his horses and himself down to "that *execrable* Kennel", Southwell. "I hope" (as his last word) "you have engaged a Man Servant, else it will be impossible for me to visit you, since my Servant must attend chiefly

[1] For all this, see *L. and J.* i. 92–96.

to his horses; at the same time, you must cut an indifferent Figure with only maids in your establishment". Mrs. Byron had at that time about £400 a year, while her son's personal allowance was £500. This is one of the moments in which she takes the stage with authority as an injured mother. "I am well rewarded", she writes to Hanson of this letter. "I came to Nottingham to please him, and now he hates it. He knows that I am doing everything in my power to pay his Debts, and he writes to me about hiring servants".

On March 10, Hanson's letter-bag was again Byronic, and this time to the tune of a confession and a demand from the culprit himself. "I confess I have borrowed a trifling sum and now wish to raise £500 to discharge some Debts I have contracted . . . the Cash must be disbursed *somewhere* or *somehow*, and if you decline (as in prudence I tell you fairly you ought) the *Tribe* of *Levi* will be my *dernier resort*" [*sic*].[1] Another quarrel with Hanson was the immediate result of the answer he received, and it was the summer of that year (1806) which was spent at Southwell. An attempt was made to compel him to return by cutting off supplies; it failed, for he did not reappear at Cambridge until the Summer Term of 1807.

Mrs. Byron again wrote to Hanson on March 19, 1807. "Lord Byron has now been with me seven months, with two Men-Servants, for which I have never received one farthing, as he requires the £500 a year for himself. Therefore it is impossible I can keep him and them out of my small income of £400 a year—two in Scotland,[2] and the pension is now reduced to £200

[1] *L. and J.* i. 97–98.

[2] Mrs. Gordon of Gight, whose annuity had been charged on Mrs. Byron's income, was now dead.

a year. But if the Court allows the additional two hundred, I shall be perfectly satisfied. I do not know what to say about Byron's returning to Cambridge. When he was there, I believe he did nothing but drink, gamble, and spend money".[1] Finally, £1000 was borrowed: £200 from bankers at Southwell, and the remainder from old friends of his mother, the Misses Parkyns of Nottingham, and from his great-aunt, Mrs. George Byron. For this debt his mother made herself liable. He promised her a "mortgage on one of the farms", but none was given. Mrs. Byron, in 1809, before Byron's departure on the Albanian tour, begged Hanson to see that he gave some security for this debt. He did not give any; and Mr. Prothero[2] says that her death in 1811 "was doubtless accelerated by anxiety from these causes".

Young men are from of old "privileged" to be selfish, above all with their mothers. Let us then condemn our undergraduate no further than by remarking that he used his privilege bravely.

Cambridge, unloved and unloving in life, did him honour, though tardily, in death. Trinity College has placed Thorwaldsen's statue of him in her Library, and preserves there also the first letter he ever wrote.[3] The statue was subscribed for by a number of his admirers, with Hobhouse at their head. They raised a sum of £1000, which proved inadequate to secure any eminent British sculptor; Thorwaldsen, who had done a bust of him in 1817,[4] offered to undertake the work

[1] *L. and J.* i. 128–29. [2] *L. and J.* i. note to p. 221.

[3] It is apparently addressed to his aunt, Mrs. Parker, and was written when he was ten years and ten months old. It is dated from Newstead, November 8, 1798 (*L. and J.* i. 6).

[4] It is now in the possession of Lady Dorchester.

for the sum subscribed, and the Committee closed with his generous proposal. The work was begun in 1829, but was not sent to England until 1834—ten years after Byron's death. "Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's, the British Museum, the National Gallery, were each in turn considered as appropriate places for its reception; but all, even the secular institutions, refused to receive it, and the statue remained for ten years or longer unpacked in the cellars of the Custom-House".[1]

[1] Elze, *Life of Byron*, Authorised translation, p. 66. There is a statue of Byron in Hamilton Gardens, London, separated only by a railing from the broad drive in Hyde Park. On April 19 in each year a wreath of Gloire de Dijon roses is placed at the foot, under the bequest of a lady who left a legacy for this purpose, and for the insertion of a memorial notice in *The Times*, until the day that the Dean of Westminster shall allow Byron's name to be inscribed in the Poet's Corner of the Abbey.

CHAPTER VII

THE FIRST BOOK AND THE SECOND—1806 AND 1809

Byron's Egeria—The *Fugitive Pieces*—The Rev. John Becher, and the burning of the first quarto—*Poems on Various Occasions*—Bankes, and a Byron letter—*Hours of Idleness*—Success—Robert Charles Dallas—William Harness—The *Edinburgh Review*—*English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*—Fame—Remorse—"A kind of posthumous feel"

DURING the early Southwell period of 1804, Byron and Elizabeth Pigot were one day studying Burns together in the parlour of her mother's house. She had been reading aloud, and had just finished the *Farewell to Ayrshire*:[1]

> "Scenes of woe and scenes of pleasure,
> Scenes that former thoughts renew,
> Scenes of woe and scenes of pleasure,
> Now a sad and last Adieu".

Her companion exclaimed "I like that metre: let me try it"—and taking a pencil, he wrote on the instant those two stanzas, beginning,

> "Hills of Annesley, bleak and barren"

—which, when they were published for the first time in Moore's *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron*, 1830,

[1] "It may be noted" (says Mr. E. H. Coleridge) "that these verses were not written by Burns, though included until recently among his poems". They are by one Richard Gall, who died in 1801 (*Poems*, i. 211).

appeared with the legend: "Written shortly after the marriage of Miss Chaworth".[1]

The ice broken by this impromptu, Elizabeth heard of his long meditation of the muse. Ever since 1802 it had gone on. He was persuaded to inscribe for her one infant effort; and so she read (more respectfully no doubt than we have done) the lines to Lord Delawarr of February 1803:

> "In thee I fondly hoped to clasp".

She must have encouraged him, for he then had the hardihood to recite another effusion. This too had been written in 1803, and in it he exclaimed:

> "My epitaph shall be my name alone;
> If that with honour fail to crown my clay,
> Oh! may no other fame my deeds repay!
> That, only that, shall single out the spot,
> By that remembered, or with that forgot".

She might excusably kindle at this achievement for fifteen; and then, no doubt, she heard of the "first dash into poetry"—the forgotten verses to his exquisite cousin Margaret—in 1800; was perhaps regaled with a recital of the frigid elegiac stanzas of 1802, in memory of the same girl. But whatever reserves there may have been and whatever criticisms, the day marked an epoch for them both—and for the world; since from that moment "the desire to appear in print took possession of him".

His ambition went no further, at the time, than "a small volume for private circulation". He began to collect what he had scribbled, to scribble more and more; and by August 1806, his first book was in the

[1] Mary Chaworth was not married until August 1805; so we have here a case for strong suspicion of Moore's ingenuousness. It was certainly more ingenious than ingenuous thus to head the stanzas; for Elizabeth Pigot, who copied them for him, can hardly have failed to tell him what in 1859—correctly or incorrectly—she stated "under her hand and seal" respecting the date of their composition (see *Poems*, i. 210–11).

press. Messrs. S. & J. Ridge, booksellers and printers of Newark, were the recipients of his MS., and he did not delay to adopt the sanctioned attitude of disdain for his typographer. Ridge figured instantly as "that blockhead"; but, daily flooded as he was with corrections, alterations, additions, and wholly fresh material, the blockhead managed to be ready by November. It was a quarto volume of sixty-six pages, and contained thirty-eight pieces. The first copy was presented to the Rev. John Becher, "Vicar of Rympton, Notts, and Midsomer Norton"—which evidently meant that he lived at Southwell, for he had long been an intimate friend, and now appeared as a judicious counsellor. We have seen that the summer of 1806 was the period of "Little"[1] and Strangford as literary influences. Becher had from the first frowned on such readings (nothing in Moore[2] is more engaging than the manner in which he records this condemnation of his early muse), and had recommended, as might be expected, the study of Shakespere, Milton, and the Bible, instead. He now opened his quarto, and among the harmless puerilities and the first adumbrations of that destined wonder of the world called Byronism, he found those verses *To Mary* which have become notorious by dint of resolute suppression. He read them, frowned again, and then sat down and wrote to the boy ("as the most gentle mode of conveying his opinion") some expostulatory couplets. Byron answered without delay, and doubly: first in a "copy of verses":

> "The artless Helicon I boast is youth;—
> My Lyre, the Heart—my Muse, the simple Truth";

[1] In a letter to Moore of June 9, 1820, Byron wrote: "I have just been turning over Little, which I knew by heart in 1803, being then in my fifteenth summer. Heigho! I believe all the mischief I have ever done, or sung, has been owing to that confounded book of yours".

[2] *Life of Lord Byron* (ed. 1838), p. 40.

then in a note, which promised that rather than allow the condemned poem to circulate, he would destroy[1] the whole impression. That evening he kept his promise. Becher watched every copy of the quarto burn, except one which had already gone to John Pigot at Edinburgh—and his own.[2] There is something irresistibly humorous in Becher's salvage of his own, but it was probably prompted by admiring pity for the generous boy who had been so proud of his first book—and now beheld it burn, unread, unseen, by all but two. Few of us could have done it, I think; and though the drama of the scene, and the vanity of stoicism, and, vaguely, that dear scorn for the "multitude", may have mingled into a mitigation of the sacrifice, it remained no less a sacrifice and an ordeal. Without straining at sentiment, we may surely see in imagination a dimming of the eye, a quivering of the lip, as eighteen-yeared Byron watched his "first-born" sink into a squalid little heap of ashes.

But his enthusiasm survived, and no sooner was the burning over than he began to prepare an expurgated and enlarged edition. For the next six weeks he and Ridge (who was again employed) were wholly absorbed in this

[1] A facsimile reprint of the quarto, limited to a hundred copies, was issued, for private circulation only, by the Chiswick Press in 1886. In it the suppressed verses of course appear; but Byron himself never allowed them to see the light after the destruction of the first edition.

[2] These copies still survive. John Pigot's came into the possession of his sister Elizabeth, who bequeathed it, with other relics of the past, to Mrs. Webb of Newstead Abbey, where it is still preserved with watchful care. This copy is defective. Two of the leaves (pp. 17–20) wanting are those which contain the offending poem "to *that naughty Mary*" (as Elizabeth Pigot adds in a note attached to the copy) . . . "*which excited such a commotion in the state*". The second copy was long preserved by the Becher family, and is now in the possession of Mr. H. Buxton Forman, C.B. Not a single biographer (including myself) who has seen the lines *To Mary* has anything but condemnation for them. "There is nothing", says Elze, "to compensate for their silly viciousness—not one felicity of thought or expression".

task; and by January 1807 the second volume "for private circulation" was ready. The quarto had been entitled *Fugitive Pieces*; this edition was in small octavo and was called *Poems on Various Occasions*. Both were anonymous.[1] The octavo numbered one hundred and forty-four pages, and contained forty-eight pieces. Only a hundred copies were printed. John Pigot was again one of the earliest recipients, and was begged to destroy at once his copy of the quarto. Apparently he compromised by tearing out those leaves which held the "unlucky poem to my poor Mary".[2] "This volume", adds the hero of the Burning, "is *vastly* correct, and miraculously chaste"—and then, as if to indemnify himself for the restraint shown in it, he goes on to say, "Apropos, talking of love" . . . but we are not permitted to know the "à propos", for Moore flinched before it, and shook out asterisks with a lavish hand.

The publication of *Poems on Various Occasions* produced a letter from Cambridge. The writer was William Bankes, who came across the volume, and wrote to give his opinion. This did not happen till March, and on the same day Byron had a gratifying compliment from Henry Mackenzie, author of that rather foolish book, *A Man of Feeling*, but nevertheless a shrewd critic, and one whose praise was well worth having. Bankes, on the other hand, wrote in a spirit of severe criticism, and to me the answer from Byron is one of the most delightful displays of human nature which even *his* letters afford.

[1] Two of the poems in the quarto were signed BYRON; but the volume itself, which is without a title-page, was anonymous.

[2] This Mary is not to be confounded with the heiress of Annesley, nor with Mary of Aberdeen. She was of humble, "if not equivocal", station in life; and had long fair hair, a lock of which, as well as her picture, Byron used to show among his friends. The early verses *To Mary on receiving her Picture* (*Poems*, i. 32) were also addressed to her.

SOUTHWELL, *March* 6, 1807

"DEAR BANKES,—Your critique is valuable for many reasons: in the first place, it is the only one in which flattery has borne so slight a part; in the *next*, I am *cloyed* with insipid compliments. I have a better opinion of your judgment and ability than your *feelings*.[1] . . . I feel no hesitation in saying I was more anxious to hear your critique, however severe, than the praises of the *million*. On the same day I was honoured with the encomiums of *Mackenzie*, the celebrated author of the *Man of Feeling*. Whether *his* approbation or *yours* elated me most, I cannot decide. . . . Your further remarks, however *caustic* or bitter, to a palate vitiated with the sweets of *adulation*, will be of service".

Bankes wrote again, suggesting alterations; and Byron replied, "This shall be done in the next edition. . . . Since my last, I have received two critical opinions from Edinburgh, both too flattering for me to detail. One is from Lord Woodhouselee, at the head of the Scotch *literati* . . . the other from Mackenzie, who sent his decision a second time, more at length. I am not personally acquainted with either of these gentlemen . . . their praise is voluntary". The letter closes with the announcement that he is "now preparing a volume for the public at large"—to appear at the end of May: a hazardous experiment, but, among other things, the encouragement he has met with induces him to stand the test.

And so, in the June or July of 1807, there appeared, still printed and sold by Ridge of Newark, but now to be had from four London booksellers besides, a small

[1] In another letter to Bankes in 1809, this impression of heartlessness is again referred to. "Believe me, with that deference which I have always from my childhood paid to your *talents*, and with a somewhat better opinion of your heart than I have hitherto entertained,—Yours ever, etc."

octavo volume, entitled *Hours of Idleness*:[1] *a Series of Poems Original and Translated*, "By George Gordon, Lord Byron, a Minor". Ridge sold fifty in a fortnight, "before the advertisements". In the earlier form of *Childish Recollections* (the long Harrow piece which first appeared in *Poems on Various Occasions*) the young singer had groaned:

> "Weary of love, of life, devour'd with spleen,
> I rest, a perfect Timon, not nineteen;
> World! I renounce thee! all my hope's o'ercast,
> One sigh I give thee, but that sigh's the last".[2]

Yet never did ordinary mortal watch more eagerly his effect upon that rejected world than did our perfect Timon, not nineteen. "Does my publication go off well?" he demands of the faithful Elizabeth Pigot on June 30; on July 5, "Has Ridge sold well? or do the ancients demur? What ladies have bought?"—and when told of the fifty in a fortnight, and of Ridge's being nevertheless impatient at the slowness of the sales, he writes with naïve complacency, "What the devil would Ridge have? . . . Are they liked or not in Southwell?" A presentation copy (he informs Elizabeth) had been forwarded to Lord Carlisle, "who sent, before he opened the book, a tolerably handsome letter.[3] . . . I have not heard from him since. His opinions I neither know nor care about; if he is the least insolent, I shall enrol him with Butler and other worthies". And soon there came a flamboyant epistle—

[1] This title is now associated with Byron's *Juvenilia*. The collection of minor poetry so named (which has been included in every edition of Byron's Poetical Works issued by John Murray since 1831) consists of seventy pieces, being the aggregate of the poems published in the three issues—those of January and June 1807, and the final collection of 1808 (*Poems*, i. 12).

[2] *Poems*, i. 84.

[3] In this letter it is amusing to find that Carlisle did not know how to spell "diligent". He gave it two *l*'s.

already alluded to. "Ridge does not proceed rapidly in Notts—very possibly. In town things wear a more promising aspect, and a man whose works are praised by *reviewers*, admired by *duchesses*, and sold by every bookseller of the metropolis, does not dedicate much consideration to *rustic readers*". There had been a long notice in Crosby's magazine, *Literary Recreations* (he omitted to tell her that Crosby was Ridge's London agent, and that this was mere "booming"), and she was advised to order the number for July—especially as it contained, besides, his own maiden essay in criticism.[1] He continues: "My cousin, Lord Alexander Gordon . . . told me his mother, her Grace of Gordon,[2] requested he would introduce my *Poetical* Lordship to her Highness, as she had bought my volume, admired it exceedingly, in common with the rest of the fashionable world, and wished to claim her relationship with the author". But the meeting failed to be arranged, and "Gordon's broad and brawny Grace" never encountered her young kinsman.

Crosby had now sold two "importations", and had sent to Ridge for a third. "In every bookseller's window I see my *own name*, and *say nothing*, but enjoy my fame in secret". There were two critics at least who wanted more; and he was preparing to gratify them by writing

[1] This was a review of Wordsworth's *Poems* (2 vols. 1807). It would be difficult to imagine anything more banal. The ready-made phrase glides from his pen without intermission; nor is any kind of penetration displayed in the criticism.

[2] She was "the witty Duchess of Gordon", born Miss Jean Maxwell of Monteith. The most successful matchmaker of her age, she married three of her daughters to three dukes. She had five, and married them all, though not invariably as she dreamed. She had wanted Pitt for Lady Charlotte, and Eugène Beauharnais for Georgiana, who became Duchess of Bedford. She attacked "Vathek" Beckford too, and stayed more than a week at Fonthill, magnificently entertained—but without ever seeing the master of the house.

a long poem in blank verse on Bosworth Field. There were to be eight or ten books, and it was not to be finished for three or four years. If it was ever finished, it was never published; and the same fate awaited a novel of which 214 pages were written. But yet another piece of work was in hand: "a poem of 380 lines, to be published (without my name) in a few weeks, with notes . . . a Satire". Of this there will presently be much to say.

In November, Ridge resolved on printing a second edition; and a new critic sprang up in the person of one Robert Charles Dallas, who was a connection by marriage,[1] and now took the opportunity of introducing himself by writing a complimentary letter (on January 6, 1808) about *Hours of Idleness*. He was himself a voluminous writer of poetry and novels, all without exception forgotten—and he was destined, later in their connection, to prove himself a critic of value. But Dallas, though kindly and affectionate, was without a spark of humour; and Byron, to whom he from the first dealt forth every solemnity of his excellence, soon perceived the fun that was to be had out of it, and responded with his most strident "*fanfaronnade des vices*". His first answer was serious, but even in it he failed not to calumniate himself. "The events of my short life have been of so singular a nature. . . . I have been already held up as the votary of licentiousness and the disciple of infidelity. . . . My hand is almost as bad as my character". Dallas, who had specially eulogised the moral qualities displayed in *Hours of Idleness*, was much distressed by this revelation, for he believed every word of it. He wrote at once,

[1] His sister, Henrietta Dallas, married George Anson Byron (second son of Admiral Byron), who was the poet's uncle. Their son succeeded our Byron in the title.

commending this time, instead of the morality, the candour of his kinsman; and Byron, now fully alive to the darling opportunity, responded with a "mystification" in his best vein. He laid his soul bare: his erudition and his illiteracy, his folly and his cynicism, his immorality, infidelity—*toute la lyre!* "You have here a brief compendium of the sentiments of the *wicked* George, Lord Byron; and till I get a new suit, you will perceive I am badly clothed". They continued their intercourse, nevertheless, and Dallas[1] proved, in the future, very useful—though not more so than Byron was generous to him.

There was a revival, too, of an old but lapsed friendship—that with William Harness, who had been with him at Harrow. Harness, when at ten years old he entered the school, was lame (and always remained so) from an accident in childhood, and was only just recovering from a severe illness. Byron, seeing him attacked by a boy bigger than himself, interfered and took his part; and next day, finding the child standing alone, went up to him and said, "If any one bullies you, tell me, and I'll thrash him if I can". That was a kind of relationship dear, as we have learnt, to the young patron, and Harness and he were for a time inseparable. Later a coolness arose between them—from absence (the truancy of the Mary Chaworth period) and "the difference in our conduct", as Byron wrote in February 1808, in a letter full of reminiscence and sentiment. "The first lines I ever attempted at Harrow were addressed to you. You were to have seen them; but

[1] Dallas, after Byron's death, wrote *Recollections of the Life of Lord Byron from the year 1808 to the end of 1814*, but the publication was stopped by a decree (obtained by Byron's executors) in the Court of Chancery, August 23, 1824—on the strength of certain letters to Mrs. Byron which it contained. The book was republished in Paris, edited by the writer's son, in 1825 (Galignani).

Sinclair[1] had the copy in his possession when we went home;—and, on our return, we were *strangers*". They never, indeed, spoke during Byron's last year at school, nor till after the publication of *Hours of Idleness*. Harness was then eighteen, and in one of the upper forms at Harrow. He gave Moore the following account of their renewal of intercourse. "In an English theme" [at Harrow] "I happened to quote from the volume,[2] and mention it with praise. It was reported to Byron that I had, on the contrary, spoken slightingly of his work and of himself. . . . Wingfield . . . a mutual friend of Byron and myself, disabused him of the error into which he had been led, and this was the occasion of the first letter"—that from which a passage has been quoted. "Our intimacy was renewed, and continued from that time till his going abroad. Whatever faults Byron might have had towards others, to myself he was always uniformly affectionate. I have many slights and neglects towards him to reproach myself with; but I cannot call to mind a single instance of caprice or unkindness in the whole course of our friendship, to allege against him".[3]

[1] "The prodigy of our schooldays was George Sinclair (son of Sir John): he made exercises for half the school (*literally*), verses at will, and themes without it. . . . He was a friend of mine, and in the same remove, and used at times to beg me to let him do my exercises—a request always most readily accorded. . . . On the other hand, he was pacific, and I savage; so I fought for him, or thrashed others for him, or thrashed himself to make him thrash others. . . . I have some of his letters, written to me from School, still" (Moore, p. 21).

[2] *Hours of Idleness.*

[3] Harness went to Christ's College, Cambridge, but this was after Byron had left. He was ordained in 1812, and forms one of the group of clergymen who were, somewhat unexpectedly, among Byron's intimates. He was a great friend of Mary Russell Mitford, who had an enthusiastic admiration for him: "the best parish priest in London, and the truest Christian". He wrote her Life in collaboration with the Rev. A. G. L'Estrange, whose *Life of the Rev. W. Harness* is the chief authority for his career. To Harness Byron had intended to dedicate *Childe Harold*, but

Harness was among those friends whose portraits Byron collected when he went abroad in 1809. He employed George Sanders, "one of the first miniature painters of the day" (and the painter also of several portraits of Byron, two of which have been often engraved), to take them, "of course, at my expense, as I never allow my acquaintance to incur the least expenditure to gratify a whim of mine. . . . Just now", he continued, "it seems foolish enough; but in a few years, when some of us are dead, and others are separated . . . it will be a kind of satisfaction to retain in these images of the living the idea of our former selves, and to contemplate, in the resemblances of the dead, all that remains of judgment, feeling, and a host of passions."[1]

Thus, until the spring of 1808, the First Book brought him nothing but good—new friendship and the revival of an old one, flattery, and a little graceful renown. So high were his spirits that two trips were projected. August 11, 1807, saw a letter to Elizabeth: "On Sunday next I set off for the Highlands". Everything was minutely planned, Iceland was included in the itinerary (but this was to be kept from Mrs. Byron—"*my nice mamma*"—who would imagine he was on a voyage of discovery, and raise "the accustomed maternal warwhoop"); and all the Erse traditions were to be collected into a volume to appear next spring. . . . Already, in the August of 1805, the same dream had been dreamed, and "the Highlands" had become a

feared to do so, "lest it should injure him in his profession" (*L. and J.* i. 177–80).

[1] It is interesting to discover here that Byron, like many another of us, fell in love with his own phrases. This is shown by the reappearance of "all that remains, etc." in his note to line 686 of *English Bards*, which refers to his friend Lord Falkland's death in a duel (*Poems*, i. 351).

joke among his friends. Elizabeth Pigot now wrote to John: "How can you ask if Lord B. is going to visit the Highlands in the summer? Why, don't *you* know that he never knows his own mind for ten minutes together? I tell him he is as fickle as the winds, and as uncertain as the waves". And, sure enough, the Highlands were abandoned; in October a fresh plan held the stage. "Next January I am going to *sea* for four or five months with my cousin Captain Bettesworth[1] who commands the *Tartar*, the finest frigate in the navy". Mrs. Byron was again to be kept in ignorance, "or she will be throwing her tomahawk at my curious projects". They were going to the Mediterranean, or the West Indies, or the devil. But once again he failed to start for any of the destinations.

This was a time of great impecuniosity, and the financial strait induced some hours of deep depression. Hanson's letter-bag became again Byronic, in every sense of the word. And with the New Year of 1808 there came another turn of Fortune's wheel in the wrong direction. Byron heard that the *Edinburgh Review* was preparing to notice *Hours of Idleness*.

At that stage of its development, it was hardly possible for the *Edinburgh Review* to notice anything without truculently attacking it. "They had become *feræ naturæ*", said the author[2] of an anonymously

[1] Captain George Edmund Byron Bettesworth was, through his grandmother, Sophia Trevanion "of Carhais, in Cornwall", Byron's cousin. He was killed off Bergen in this year 1808, while in command of the *Tartar*.

[2] He was one John Watkins, LL.D. In a letter from Isaac d'Israeli to Byron, in 1822, we find an allusion to this extraordinary performance. "There was a shameless imposition practised by Colburn, who announced THE life of Lord Byron . . . by a heavy garrettier *en chef*, a Dr. Watkins, who is a dead hand at a Life! And if your Lordship received your own life, it was enough to have deprived you of it!—for some have died of laughter" (*L. and J.* vi. 86). It was entitled *Memoirs Historical and Critical of the Life of Lord Byron, with anecdotes of some of his Contemporaries.* London, 1822.

published Memoir of Byron in 1822; and it was one of the few truths which his book contained. . . . Byron heard of the "most violent attack which is preparing for me," through a friend who had seen the MS. and proof. He wrote to Becher, half-alarmed, half-gratified, at being of so much importance, "as they profess to pass judgment only on works requiring the public attention. You will see this when it comes out; it is, I understand, of the most unmerciful description. . . . Tell Mrs. Byron not to be out of humour with them, and to prepare her mind for the greatest hostility on their part. . . . They defeat their object by indiscriminate abuse, and they never praise except the partisans of Lord Holland and Co.". "That is to say", notes Mr. Prothero, "the *Edinburgh Review* praised only Whigs".

The January number of the "Wild Beast" did not appear until the end of February. The article was there—the true, abominable article! He read it in one panting moment; and just as he finished, a visitor was announced.[1] He raised his head as this friend entered. "Have you received a challenge, Byron?" exclaimed the latter, so startled was he by the fierce defiance of the face. . . . Anger of such calibre is potent for beauty. That flashing face assails the imagination: more literally, perhaps, than at any other moment wherein we know or are to know him, do we "see" Byron in this one.

And what of the article? The article was abominable; the judgment was true. If a great critical journal were to notice *Hours of Idleness* at all . . . But there precisely was the wrong. For the *Edinburgh Review* to notice *Hours of Idleness* at all was a confession of malice. Supreme as they were, and knew themselves to be, the Reviewers fell upon this garland of boyish

[1] Moore, who tells the anecdote, does not give the visitor's name.

verse—one out of a hundred volumes, neither worse nor better, of the year 1807—and tore it to pieces. And why *this* volume? All the world knew why. Only this one bore a noble name on the title-page. "The opportunity" (said the *Quarterly* in 1831, reviewing Moore) "of insulting a lord, under pretext of admonishing a poetaster, was too tempting to be resisted, in a particular quarter, at that particular time". It was the inversion of snobbery—as despicable as the original baseness.[1]

For long Byron believed the author to have been Jeffrey, who edited the Review. The author was in reality—by his own acknowledgment, "after denying it for thirty years"[2]—Henry, Lord Brougham.[3] . . . By an odd turn of destiny, Byron in later life conceived for him, both in his political and legal capacities, a profound and bitter hatred. In *Don Juan* he wrote seven stanzas so depreciatory of the "miscreant" that he himself forbade Murray to print them; "but I by no means wish *him not* to *know* their existence or their tenor".

The day went by; and he used always to narrate, in recalling it, that he "drank three bottles of claret to

[1] H. Crabb Robinson told De Morgan that at that time he was one day sitting with Charles Lamb when Wordsworth came in, "with fume in his countenance, and the *Edinburgh Review* in his hand. 'I have no patience with these Reviewers', he said; 'here is a young man, a lord, and a minor, it appears, who publishes a little volume of poetry, and these fellows attack him, as if no one may write poetry unless he lives in a garret. The young man will do something, if he goes on'".

[2] Sir M. E. Grant-Duff, *Notes from a Diary*, ii. 189.

[3] In Medwin's *Conversations* Byron is represented as saying: "[Jeffrey] disowned it" (the article on *Hours of Idleness*); "and though he would not give up the aggressor, he said he would convince me, if I ever came to Scotland, who the person was. I have every reason to believe it was a certain lawyer, who hated me for something I had once said of Mrs. [George Lamb]. The technical language about 'minority pleas', 'plaintiffs', 'grounds of action', etc., a jargon only intelligible to a lawyer, leaves no doubt in my mind on the subject". The further context proves the suspected lawyer to have been Brougham.

his own share after dinner". But nothing relieved him till he had given vent to his indignation in rhyme, and "after the first twenty lines, he felt considerably better". He wrote to Shelley, thirteen years later, "I recollect the effect on me . . . it was rage and resistance and redress; but not despondency nor despair". And on the same date to Murray, "[It] knocked me down, but I got up again". He "got up again" with *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. But not until the March of 1809; for a whole year was spent in polishing weapons which had been already in order for attack, and were now retained to be made more deadly for defence. We have seen that in the October of 1807 he had told Elizabeth Pigot of "a poem of 380 lines to be published in a few weeks with notes . . . a Satire". It was entitled *British Bards*; and now the 520 lines to which it ran were printed in book form, for convenience probably, by Ridge of Newark. After the *Edinburgh's* review, he set to work at enlarging and recasting this piece,[1] and on March 16, 1809, the Satire, then and now entitled *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, appeared anonymously.

This delay in revenge is one of the very few actions of Byron which are "unlike" him. Excited as he had been, and rapid in composition as he was, it might well have been supposed that he would flame forth instantly. But for once he calculated. He perceived that his next move would be decisive for his future fame. *British Bards* was already a work of brilliant technique and pungent satire; now the technique must be made dazzling, and the satire vitriolic. He concentrated on the task with all the force of his mind and of his burning anger; and among the tools that he found ready to his hand

[1] A single copy, which he kept for corrections and additions, was preserved by Dallas, and is now in the British Museum.

were not only the recent swarm of literary and political lampoons—the *Baviad*, *Mæviad*, *Rolliad*; Canning's *New Morality*, Mathias's *Pursuits of Literature*, Wolcot's ("Peter Pindar's") brutalities—but another, older model, world-renowned and immortal as his own was to become: the filthy, glittering *Dunciad* of Alexander Pope.[1]

He studied it eagerly and profoundly, and caught the glitter, leaving the filth untouched. By the New Year of 1809 he thought his work finished, and took it up to London from Newstead—where by this time he was more or less installed, Lord Grey de Ruthyn's tenancy having ended in the April of 1808. But no sooner had the sheets gone to press than fresh matter occurred to him; having once begun to add, the fever grew, and he increased the length by more than a hundred lines. Alterations, too, poured in on Dallas every day—for Dallas had undertaken to see it through the press. In one of his covering notes, Byron said, "Print soon, or I shall overflow with more rhyme"; and this habit of "feeding" the printers to the very last moment remained with him as long as he remained within reach of *them*. Everything "came in", as it were, for the Satire: a visit to the Opera drove the young moralist to denounce its licentiousness. "A cut at the opera!" he wrote gleefully to Dallas. "*Ecce signum!* from last night's observations".[2] The twenty lines in question were struck off after his return, and sent next morning for the printer. . . . So it went on; but at last he was ready, and on March 16 (just after taking his seat in the House of Lords)

[1] Moore thought that from this period dated "the enthusiastic admiration which he ever afterwards cherished for this great poet".

[2] The piece which provoked the outburst was *I Villeggiatori Rezzani*, at the King's Theatre, February 21, 1809. Naldi and Catalani were the principal singers.

English Bards and Scotch Reviewers burst upon the town.

Its success was instantaneous. James Cawthorn, of the British Library, 24 Cockspur Street, London, was the publisher[1] (*vice* Ridge of Newark, deposed), and printed an edition of a thousand. Byron had modestly protested: "We shall never sell a thousand; then why print so many?"—but the work was seen at once to be of genius, and, moreover, conjecture fastened eagerly upon the author's name. London was soon murmurous with the right one; and Dallas, visiting Hatchard's, heard the kind of report which makes, for its delightful moment, an author's life seem really worth the living. Hatchard had sold a great many, had none left, was sending for more—and on being asked by the wily friend for the author's name, said that "a lady of distinction had, without hesitation, asked for the Satire as 'Lord Byron's'". This was good, but Hatchard had a still keener bliss to impart. "Gifford had spoken very highly of it". . . . In Byron's literary character there are few features more singular than the immense ("and", says Henley, "very fatuous") respect which he entertained for Gifford. He called him his Magnus Apollo, and a little while before his death wrote: "I have always considered him as my literary father, and myself as his prodigal son". The prodigal sonship was the outcome of remorse for his own departure from the methods of Pope—of whom, as we have seen and shall see, he was a worshipper. Gifford was now the high priest of the Alexandrine tradition, and *English Bards* was frankly modelled on the *Dunciad*. He had apparently seen it in MS., for it was before its

[1] The house of Longman & Co. refused it, together (as Byron wrote in 1822) with "half the trade" in London, "though *no* demand was made". "*They know nothing*", was his comment on this timidity.

publication that Byron, hearing of his comments, wrote hysterically to their common friend, Hodgson, that "it was too good to be true . . . but even the idea was too precious to part with".[1]

Thus did he achieve his revenge—and such a revenge as author never had before nor since. The town rang with his name, and the triumph was no "flash in the pan", no success of scandal (as it might well have been with mere personal satire for the theme); but the unmistakable emergence of genius—genius that had come to stay. In 1809, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* was read with glee and admiration, and neither emotion hesitates as we turn the leaves to-day. Every page must be heavily fringed with notes ere we may grasp the point of the gibes, yet it is with eyes already mirthful that we seek the margin. Praise of topical satire can go no further. If after the lapse of a hundred years it can do this, it has done all; and in the present case done all the more victoriously because some of the bards whom it ridicules are reckoned now among the "poet-kings". . . . Here first, then, but again and again to be reckoned with, we encounter that spell of personality which may be called the secret of Byronism. He struck such fire into every-

[1] Henley's note on Gifford is too vivid to be passed over. "His literary temper is atrocious; his criticisms, whether aggressive or corrective, seem the effect of downright malignity; in the long-run you are tempted to side with his victims. . . . Monstrous though it seem to us now . . . this alliance" [Byron's and Gifford's] "between Leviathan and a blind-worm (so to speak) was genuine, and the sincerity of neither party to it can be impugned". Swinburne called Gifford "an asp"; but he did good service to literature in the *Baviad*, the *Mæviad*, and the *Epistle to Peter Pindar*—in the two first, utterly annihilating the "Della-Cruscan" school of poetry, and in the last, "checking the insolence of as bold and hard-hitting a ruffian as the journalism of the time could boast" (Henley). Gifford's physical deformity may have had something to do with his attraction for Byron.

thing he did that, in a sense, it hardly mattered what he did, or how he did it. The words (sometimes well, but seldom supremely well, chosen) ring with the very sound of him—the voice of his being, as it were—and are more stirring than the better chosen words of others. The *Dunciad* is a case in point. It was his chief model for the Satire, and is superior in every kind of accomplishment; but accomplishment is just what Byron seemed so miraculously able to dispense with. We read the *Dunciad* now, and smile a little, dimly, when we do not yawn. We see the glitter and the high technique (though the opening seems to me the dullest of things readable), and for their sakes condone the filth; but our eyes do not light nor our spirits unaccountably rise—we do not, in short, feel that we have enjoyed ourselves. That is what we do feel as we close the *English Bards*, with its inimitably vivid opening, its bold, quick flights, its lines (hackneyed now) that have the very accent of the master:

> "'Tis pleasant, sure, to see one's name in print,
> A book's a book, altho' there's nothing in't";
>
> "Oh, AMOS COTTLE! Phœbus! what a name
> To fill the speaking-trump of future fame!"

and that delightful one, cancelled for an inferior in the fifth edition:[1]

> "In many marble-covered volumes view
> *Hayley, in vain attempting something new*".

If such enjoyment of so faulty a performance remains inexplicable, it is because nearly everything about Byron remains so—and that by reason of the personal magic which has itself from all time baffled its shrewdest analysts.

[1] The fifth edition was suppressed by himself. It passed under his own supervision, and from it the text in the Coleridge edition of the *Poems* has been printed.

The Reviewers had called forth this, its earliest manifestation; and though it must in any case have emerged, we feel that it is possible to close the account of English literature with the Scottish "wild beast" in a spirit of gratitude. Jeffrey—"dear d——d contemner of my early Muse"—became one of his kindliest critics; and when the tumult and the shouting had died, the editor probably read again the Review's initiatory trumpet-blast and its far-echoing answer, and decided to be unremorseful for a sin which had had so exhilarating a retribution.

But Byron, already in 1811, regretted having written *English Bards.* On his way home from the Albanian tour, writing to Dallas of the fourth edition, he said his *mea culpa*; and when, a year later, he became intimate with Lord and Lady Holland—therein bitterly attacked—and heard, through Samuel Rogers, that they would be glad if the Satire were withdrawn, he gave instant orders to Cawthorn to burn the whole impression, then being printed, of the fifth edition.[1] Not only so, but in 1816, at Diodati, Geneva, reading it over in a copy of the fourth edition,[2] he recorded his own severe judgment of himself in the pages. On the first leaf we find:

> "The binding of this volume is considerably too valuable for its contents.
>
> "Nothing but the consideration of its being the property of another prevents me from consigning this miserable record of misplaced anger and indiscriminate acrimony to the flames".

[1] A few copies escaped. Dallas kept two; one belongs to Mr. John Murray, and the other is in the British Museum.

[2] This now belongs to the house of Murray.

All through the copy ran his comments, mostly adverse. "Unjust" (to the lines on Wordsworth and Coleridge); "too savage all this on Bowles"; "too ferocious—this is mere insanity", on the margin of the page containing the truly ferocious attack upon the *Edinburgh Review* and Jeffrey; while in the verses on Lord Carlisle he perceived also an undue violence. "The provocation was not sufficient"; "much too savage, whatever the foundation may be". Yet his feeling for that nobleman had altered little, and had had little reason to alter. . . . His concluding remark on the whole performance is: "The greater part of this Satire I most sincerely wish had never been written; not only on account of the injustice of much of the critical and some of the personal part of it, but the tone and temper are such as I cannot approve". In his letters and journals, too, there are many entries of the same kind: "that confounded Satire"; "that plaguy Satire"—and he strictly forbade Murray, when in 1817 a large edition of his Collected Works was in contemplation, to republish *English Bards*. "I would not reprint them on any consideration".[1] In 1815, he sent Leigh Hunt a copy containing "some manuscript corrections previous to an edition which was printed, but not published". It was the only one he himself possessed, though Lady Byron had a copy; and he added a postscript to say that "it was not in print for sale, nor ever would be (if he could help it) again".

We can the more cordially admire this remorse because we rejoice in the ever newly realised impotence of great renown. The name is supreme, and the cry of posterity is urgent—and posterity wins always at that

[1] During his lifetime no English edition (but several unauthorised American and foreign ones) appeared until 1823, when one Benbow, dating from the notorious "Byron's Head"—which Southey described as "a preparatory school for the brothel and the gallows"—brought out a pirated impression. Byron was then in Greece, and probably knew nothing of it.

tussle. . . . In 1813 they were reading and praising the "plaguy Satire" in America; and he wrote: "To be popular in a rising and far country has a kind of *posthumous feel*". As one copies those ingenuous words, writing of him in this nineteen-hundred-and-ten, one is conscious of an emotion that annihilates comment.

CHAPTER VIII

NEWSTEAD—1808–1809

The Abbey—The "Byron Oak"—Early days at Newstead—"Boatswain"—Francis Hodgson—Hobhouse and Byron—Money troubles—His majority—"Thinness"—Byron's personal beauty—Lord Carlisle, and the introduction to the House of Lords—The attack on Carlisle—A bachelor party at Newstead—The "Paphian Girls"—Preparations for the Albanian tour

WHEN in the April of 1808, Lord Grey de Ruthyn's lease of Newstead Abbey terminated, Byron was already head over ears in debt. "*Entre nous*, I am cursedly dipped", he wrote to Mr. Becher at the end of March. "My debts, *everything* included, will be nine or ten thousand before I am twenty-one". With such a burden on his shoulders, he was thinking seriously at that time of selling the Abbey; for Rochdale, the Lancashire estate, was (once he could make his title clear) "worth three Newsteads". But though he might calmly plan, before revisiting it, such alienation of his heritage of the heart, he needed only to see it again for all thought of selling to be scattered to the winds. Here is a letter to Mrs. Byron, in March 1809, after he had lived at the Abbey for half a year. ". . . Come what may, *Newstead* and I *stand* or fall together. I have now lived on the spot, I have fixed my heart upon it, and no pressure, present or future, shall induce me to barter the last vestige of our inherit-

ance. I have that pride within me which will enable me to support difficulties. I can endure privations; but could I obtain in exchange for Newstead Abbey the first fortune in the country, I would reject the proposition. Set your mind at ease on that score; Mr. Hanson talks like a man of business. . . . I feel like a man of honour, and I will not sell Newstead".[1]

The Abbey laid a threefold spell upon him. It appealed to his pride of ancestry, his poetic imagination, and (never to be omitted from any reckoning in which Byron is concerned) his vanity—for the lovely place conferred prestige in fullest measure. William, fifth Baron, had cruelly marred, and Grey de Ruthyn, leaseholder, had basely neglected; but Newstead emerged from both ordeals as it were with the imperishable beauty of the soul, to pierce him as such beauty always could—and never more than in absence from its spell! For though to the spirit of the place he paid little outward tribute—his way of life there was almost as uninspired as elsewhere—yet the long revocation in *Juan* of that "Norman Abbey" leaves no doubt that Newstead was one of the great affections of Byron's heart. He brooded on it, as he brooded on the Lady of the Dream, and could never have loved either so well if he had not lost them. Directly love in any form appears, he is the Sentimentalist—ready to feel everything, and to do nothing. For friendship, fame, and freedom he could act; for love he could only dream.

He took up residence at the Abbey in September 1808, after having obtained his M.A. degree at

[1] We shall see that in 1812 he found himself obliged to put the Abbey up for auction. No sale was effected. Later in the same year another attempt was made, but this, too, ultimately failed. Not until November 1817 was the estate actually sold.

Cambridge; and he found the house and grounds unimaginably neglected. Long, long ago, when "the little boy from Aberdeen" arrived at the place of his inheritance, he had planted a sapling oak in the park, and had made it into an omen of his own destiny: as the tree flourished, so should he. Already in 1807, Fate, in that shape, had menaced. He had gone to see the oak, and had found it choked with weeds, almost destroyed. In the early volume of poems he recorded the experience, but not without a hope for the future, since as soon as he should again possess the "land of his fathers" the tree was to know such care as must restore it. Now it was among the earliest matters to be seen to, and it responded to his hope; for when Colonel Wildman bought the Abbey in 1817, he noticed "a fine young oak"—which nevertheless he designed to cut down, "for it grew in an improper place". But a servant who was with him on the tour of inspection pleaded that "my lord was very fond of it, because he set it himself"; and Colonel Wildman at once yielded. The oak was thereafter especially cherished, and to this day forms one of the sights of the place.

The house was almost unfit for habitation. Repairs were instantly begun, for not only did Byron mean to live there himself until "the spring of 1809", but he wished the Abbey to be his mother's home when he was away. A foreign tour was this time positively decided on, but as usual there were conflicting projects: Persia, India, "in March or May at farthest". They crystallised into the Albanian tour of 1809–11, on which he did not start until the end of June. Mrs. Byron had long desired to enjoy a sojourn at Newstead, but her son was resolute that she should not be installed until *he* had left. Her infirmities of temper were not alone the reason for

this. He had now a little knot of friends and acquaintances whom he looked forward to entertaining, and the courses which suited them and him were not such as could be pursued under any maternal eye. Charles Skinner Matthews, Scrope Davies, Hobhouse, were the centre-pieces, so to speak; but there were to be others, and among them, that "brother" to whom Lady P—— had listened at Brighton. All such projects, however, had to be put off, for at first the Abbey was the prey of the British workman.

In November he lost his dear Boatswain. Byron's love for dogs—for animals of all kinds—was remarkable; and now, with the Newfoundland's death, he was to display it in a violently exaggerated form. He wrote the tidings to a new friend, Francis Hodgson. "Boatswain is dead! He expired in a state of madness on the 18th, after suffering much, yet retaining all the gentleness of his nature to the last, never attempting to do the least injury to any one near him. I have now lost everything except old Murray". What he did not tell Hodgson was that he had himself more than once with his bare hand wiped away slaver from the lips during the paroxysms. The whole world knows of the dog's monument, which is a conspicuous feature of the gardens at Newstead; and Byron long desired to be buried in the same vault.[1] The strange Will of 1811 enshrined this sick fancy—which was twice emphatically expressed. The solicitors protested; his answer was, "It must stand". For the monument he wrote an inscription, which, together with some lines to Boatswain's memory, adorns the stone.

[1] His "old Murray" was to be there too; but Joe had his misgivings on the point. To a gentleman viewing the tomb, he once said, "If I was sure his lordship would come here, I should like it well enough, but I should not like to lie alone with the dog".

"NEAR this spot
Are deposited the remains of one
Who possessed Beauty without Vanity
Strength without Insolence
Courage without Ferocity
And all the Virtues of Man without his Vices.
This praise which would be unmeaning Flattery
If inscribed over human ashes
Is but a just tribute to the Memory of
BOATSWAIN, a Dog
Who was born at Newfoundland, May 1803,
And died at Newstead Abbey, November 18, 1808".

The lines,[1] which breathe the same spirit, contain one couplet as familiar as anything he ever wrote:

"To mark a friend's remains these stones arise;
I never knew but one—and here he lies".

John Cordy Jeaffreson, with that shrewdness which often redeems his oftener foolish book, comments thus on the Boatswain incident: "[Byron's] loves, hatreds, friendships, griefs, were so passionate that as long as any one of them was in full force . . . it possessed him completely, and caused him for the moment to imagine he had never loved or abhorred any one else. Touched by grief for the death of his . . . dog, the young man who could not go abroad for a couple of years without taking miniatures of his Harrow 'favourites' with him, wrote of the animal . . . '*I never knew but one*, etc.'"; and he gives two or three further instances as characteristic in their exaggeration of the moment's feeling. Thus—for an example of my own—Byron had with

[1] It is at least disconcerting to find, on the authority of Byron's own dating, that these lines to Boatswain's memory were written nearly three weeks before the dog died. Mr. Prothero (*L. and J.* iii. 170) refers for the date — October 30, 1808 — to a note inserted in Mrs. Byron's copy of *Imitations and Translations*, a miscellany of Hobhouse's which was published in 1809. (See *Imitations and Translations from the Antient and Modern Classics: Together with Original Poems never before Published*, 1809, p. 191.) The lines on Boatswain were first published in this.

him at this very time his then dearest friend, John Cam Hobhouse. "Hobhouse hunts as usual, and your humble servant 'drags at each remove a lengthened chain'". This rather enigmatic quotation of Goldsmith might well (if it actually does not) refer to the "chain" of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. He was deep in that affair, and was keeping his hand in at lyrics too, for this is the time of that dinner with Mary Chaworth-Musters[1] which was twice celebrated in verse, and described in a letter to Francis Hodgson.

That "new crony" had come upon the scene in 1807. He was then just about to take up the position of resident tutor at King's College, Cambridge, and was an intimate of Henry Drury—the one-time Harrow foe and theme of the first Byronic letter, but now, with mellowed tempers on both sides, become a familiar friend. There was soon a far more powerful magnet than this to draw Hodgson and Byron together. Hodgson, in 1807, published a translation of Juvenal, and was set upon by the *Edinburgh Review*. When Byron came into contact with him, he was meditating a Satire to be called *Gentle Alterative for the Reviewers*,[2] while the other, as yet unscathed, was nevertheless (as we have seen) engaged on *British Bards*. The new year of 1808 brought, on its twenty-seventh of February, Byron's baptism of vitriol—and at once the pair of victims rushed into one another's arms. To make the gesture still more passionate on Byron's part, Hodgson was a friend of Gifford. Gifford had praised the Juvenal (generously, for had he not "done" one himself?); Gifford corresponded with the lucky translator; moreover, Hodgson was unorthodox in the Alexandrine religion only in so far as to admire Dryden a little more

[1] See Chapter IV.

[2] It appeared with *Lady Jane Grey* in 1809.

fervently than Pope. An acquaintance so haloed was golden with promise, and the link between them grew stronger through the next few years. Hodgson was a potent rhymester; one of his critics said that he "appeared literally to think in verse".

Hobhouse, "hunting as usual", must nevertheless have spent some hours in rhyming like the rest—for in 1809 he published that *Miscellany* which Charles Skinner Matthews would never call anything but the "Miss-sell-any". The austerity which had made Hobhouse recoil from the white hat and grey horse at Cambridge evidently still lingered—for when Byron wrote the *Lines to a Lady on being asked my Reason for Quitting England in the Spring*, he did not dare to show them to his guest, but sent them to Hodgson as the "first reader", for "Hobhouse hates everything of the kind". This censor's view of other manifestations continued to be repressive; for exuberance of any kind he had no love. In May he had written from Cambridge to the young man about town: "I learn with delight from Scrope Davies that you have totally given up dice. To be sure you must give it up; for you to be seen every night in the very vilest company in town—could anything be more shocking, anything more unfit? I speak feelingly on this occasion, *non ignoro mali miseris*, etc. I know of nothing that should bribe me to be present once more at such horrible scenes". . . .[1] But Byron, with an unconquerable zest for experience joined to a vast capacity for self-delusion, was the victim of chance's glamour to a degree which Hobhouse, more serene and lucid in spirit, could not even imagine. In the quasi-journal of 1821—*Detached Thoughts*—he wrote: "I have a notion that gamblers are as happy as many people, being always *excited*. Women, wine,

[1] *L. and J.* i. note to p. 219.

fame, the table—even ambition, *sate* now and then; but every turn of the card and cast of the dice keeps the gamester alive; besides, one can game ten times longer than one can do anything else. I was very fond of it when young, that is to say of hazard, for I hate all *card* games—even faro. When macco (or whatever they spell it) was introduced, I gave up the whole thing, for I loved and missed the *rattle* and *dash* of the box and dice, and the glorious uncertainty, not only of good luck or bad luck, but *of any luck at all*, as one had sometimes to throw *often* to decide at all. I have thrown as many as fourteen mains running, and carried off all the cash upon the table . . . but I had no coolness, or judgment, or calculation. It was the delight of the thing that pleased me. Upon the whole, I left off in time, without being much of a winner or a loser. Since one-and-twenty years of age I played but little, and then never above a hundred, or two, or three". On this topic, Jeaffreson again displays his flickering shrewdness: "When a gamester prates of 'having left off in time, etc.', it may be taken for certain that he did not leave off in time". And Byron's "ten thousand pounds' worth of liabilities, contracted in two years", puts a startling gloss on the maxim.

In that extract, we see part of the reason for Hobhouse's total failure to influence Byron. He had force, lucidity, and kindness; he loved and was loved; yet he never prevailed in even minor matters. The reason was that these friends, when they turned the same leaf in the primer of experience, learned wholly different lessons from it. Byron's definition of happiness was (as we have just seen) "excitement". Hobhouse found such excitement merely a weariness—and knew it. Byron, in the long run, found it a weariness too, but seemed unable to realise that

he did. When he was bored, he arraigned the world, the heavens, the Deity—anything but the thing that was actually depressing him. No error is more common, but he made it seem uncommon by the passion of his perplexed resentment.

Soon he was "*alone*" at the Abbey. "I could not bear the company of my best friend above a month", he wrote to Augusta; "there is such a sameness in mankind upon the whole, and they grow so much more disgusting every day, that, were it not for a portion of ambition . . . I should live here all my life, in unvaried Solitude. I have been visited by all our Nobility and Gentry; but I return no visits. . . . I have several horses, and a considerable establishment, but I am not addicted to hunting or shooting. I hate all field sports. . . . My Library is rather extensive,[1] (and as you perhaps know) I am a mighty Scribbler; I flatter myself I have made some improvements in Newstead, and, as I am independent, I am happy, as far as any person unfortunate enough to be born into this world, can be said to be so".[2] That would seem distressingly gloomy writing from a lad of twenty, if it were not that these are—or used until recently to be—our chief purveyors of melancholy. In Byron's case, however, there were reasons for depression: there was the recent meeting with Mary Chaworth-Musters, there were the *Edinburgh Review*, the death of Boatswain, and, above all, the desperate state of his finances. The Rochdale litigation was lagging; he had suggested a compromise to Hanson, but felt himself too ignorant of such things to be anything but a reed before the wind. "I suppose it will end in my marrying a *Golden Dolly*, or blowing my brains out; it does not much matter which, the remedies are nearly alike."

[1] So punctuated in the text.

[2] *L. and J.* i. 204–5.

This was another season of Byronism for Hanson, for from the mother also letters poured into his hands. She was in the same dark mood. "I can see nothing but the Road to Ruin in all this . . . unless, indeed, Coal Mines turn to Gold Mines, or that he mends his fortune in the old and usual way by marrying a Woman with two or three hundred thousand pounds". . . . It was in such lamentable condition of mind and pocket that he celebrated his majority on January 22, 1809.[1] The festivities were pathetic; he was absent, and money and friends were absent too. An ox was roasted for the farmers and peasantry of the estate, and in the evening there was "something in the nature of a ball"—but the only thing Moore could discover about it was that John Hanson was among the dancers. The hero of the day had his own method of commemorating it. In a letter to John Murray, written from Genoa in 1822, he says: "Did I ever tell you that the day I came of age I dined on eggs and bacon and a bottle of ale for once in a way? They are my favourite dish and drinkable; but as neither of them agree with me, I never use them but on great jubilees—once in four or five years or so".

The Thinning Campaign was still going on. It was to go on all his life, for though vanity was one reason —and in his case, because of the peculiar grossness of the form his corpulency took, a sufficient one—mere common-sense as well demanded an increasing vigilance in the matter of food. Whenever he ate largely, he suffered maddening torments; and though at this age the worst of such troubles were still in the future, he never was able, at any age, to eat as other people do. At twenty-one, he had attained his full stature of

[1] Letter to Hanson (*L. and J.* i. 209). He spent the day in London at Reddish's Hotel, and Dallas found him in high spirits (*Recollections*, p. 161).

"five feet eight *and a half* inches". Jeaffreson is gnomic again: "In questions of height, it may be laid down as a sure maxim that the man who claims credit for the extra half-inch, claims credit for what he does not possess. In his boots Byron stood a trifle over five feet eight inches; but this was the height of a man standing on his toes, with heels raised by boots of peculiar make. His actual height was midway between five feet seven and five feet eight inches. And on the nineteenth anniversary of his birthday this young man of average height weighed fourteen stone and six pounds". Nor was it an ordinary, all-prevailing fatness—for his shoulders and arms were unusually broad and thewy, while his legs were undeveloped. But worst of all was the effect upon his face: "it became swollen to unsightliness with fleshy tissue".

One is tempted to exclaim, in a parody of Caponsacchi: "No, sir, I cannot have the Byron fat!" The world could not indeed have had it; and he, too, emphatically declined the state. No means were neglected: "violent exercise, much physic, and hot baths". . . . What can the violent exercise have been? He could swim and ride—but these are no exercises for the reduction of fat. And "in Byron's days at Trinity, the Cam knew nothing about eight-oars, and four-oars, and sculling matches", which would have been a pleasant way to the desired slenderness. He could spar with Jackson, and fence with Angelo, but only "for short spurts and at the cost of intense pain". So the means were, in sober truth, restricted to starvation, "much physic, and hot baths"; and all these were unsparingly employed. Byron has been scorned for this vigilance; I agree with Jeaffreson that the scorn is unconsidered. "When a man cannot be natural without looking like a hog, he does well to be unnatural for the sake of looking like a

man"; and perhaps it is, more than anything else, the fact that Byron, in being unnatural, achieved not only the looking like a man, but the looking like an angel, which has caused him to be derided. If he had "come out" an average advertisement of his processes, we may conjecture that much less would have been heard of them.

Moreover, with the thickness of body, he found that there arrived a corresponding thickness of mind; and when we add to this the further power of dyspepsia to stupefy its victims, we perceive that Byron—to whom his intellectual activity brought the only real happiness he ever knew—had motives more than sufficient for the sacrifices which he made. Gross, stupid, and repulsive! When we find the man who can accept that destiny without a struggle, we have found one whose destiny is of little importance.

The effect of the austerities was, as I have said, all too enviable. There emerged from them a creature of "matchless beauty"—of beauty about which such observers as Walter Scott, Coleridge,[1] Stendhal, were eloquent in later years. "I never in my life saw anything more beautiful or more impressive. Even now, when I think of the expression which a great painter should give to genius, I always have before me that magnificent head". So Stendhal wrote. And Walter Scott: "The beauty of Byron is one which makes one dream". Writing of him in 1816, Scott said further that a "brother-poet" (probably himself) had compared Byron's features "to the sculpture of a beautiful alabaster vase, lighted up from within".

I suppose there are few of us who have not believed,

[1] Coleridge said: "So beautiful a countenance I scarcely ever saw . . . his eyes the open portals of the sun—things of light, and for light" (*Astarte*, p. 110).

and some of us who still believe, that Byron's colouring was dark. On the contrary, his hair was light chestnut in childhood, and "never darkened to the deepest brown of auburn"; his blue-grey eyes seemed dark only by reason of their black lashes; and the tone and tint of his complexion were those of transparent fairness. There was scarcely one personal charm that he did not possess. The hair, luxuriant and lustrous, was of "feather-like softness"—while with our modern revolt from the cult of curly locks in a man, we may console ourselves for *his* ringlets by the knowledge (acquired from Scrope Davies) that they were not natural. Scrope, in the great Dandy-Days of 1813, penetrated into the poet's bedroom one morning before he was up or even awake —and found him with his hair in curl-papers. "Ha, ha! the S—S—Sleeping Beauty!" cried a too-familiar stammer (Davies had an "irresistible" stammer) among the dreamings. The Sleeping Beauty awoke. He was very angry at first, but soon he saw that there was only one way to take it. "I'm a d——d fool!" Davies acquiesced. "But I was sure your hair curled naturally". "Yes—naturally, every night; but don't let the cat out of the bag, for I'm as vain of my curls as a girl of sixteen".[1]

With the burden of fat removed, Byron's form became graceful and buoyant; he could move with ease and security, though of course only for short distances. To hide his lameness, he would "enter a room quickly, running rather than walking, and stop himself by planting the sound foot on the ground, and resting on it. On the rare occasions when he was seen walking in the streets . . . he moved with a peculiar sliding gait . . . in fact, with the gait of a person walking on the balls and toes of his feet, and

[1] Gronow, *Reminiscences*, 1st series, p. 209.

doing his best to hide this singular mode of progression ".[1] He never could forget his one defect—the Bad Fairy's bundle. Once he turned on Hobhouse, and said irritably (they were walking together in his garden at Genoa): "Now I know you're looking at my foot". "My dear Byron", said Hobhouse, with the gentle irony which distinguished him, "nobody ever thinks of or looks at anything but your head". Perhaps the morbidity was the more natural because he was so richly otherwise endowed. Lips, chin, brow, throat, hands—those slim white hands upon which he prided himself racially no less than personally—all were exquisite; and as if to sum up in expression the amazing beauty of the whole, he had a voice which made the children of a house he frequented in later years distinguish him from other visitors as "the gentleman who speaks like music".

But enough! See Byron we must; gloat over him we may not. He was preposterously beautiful, and there is no concealing it; but he was so much more besides that, once stated, his loveliness may be for practical purposes forgotten. How easily, had he *not* been the much more besides, he might have been the merest coxcomb, the anecdote of Scrope Davies too clearly shows.

[1] Jeaffreson (p. 36), from whom I quote, says the *left* foot was the *comparatively* sound one. He gives (p. 22) a decisive statement of the case. "The lameness . . . was due to the contraction of the tendon Achilles of each foot, which, preventing him from putting his heels to the ground, compelled him to walk on the balls and toes of his feet. Both feet may have been equally well formed, save in this sinew, till one of them was subjected to injudicious surgery; the right, however, being considerably smaller than the left. . . . This foot was also considerably distorted, so as to turn inwards" . . . but that Jeaffreson is inclined to attribute to the operations of Lavender, the Nottingham quack. He considers also that this form of lameness was "far more afflicting to the body and vexatious to the spirits than the lameness of such an ordinary club-foot as disfigured Sir Walter Scott". "Had Sir Walter been constrained to pick his way through life 'hopping' about like a bird . . . he would certainly have been less happy" than he was "with his club-foot to plant firmly on the ground" p. 23). (I quote from the standard edition.)

He left Newstead for London on January 19, with the MS. of his Satire in his pocket. There was, besides that, another serious matter to be attended to—the taking of his seat in the House of Lords. Byron was under the impression that it was necessary—or at any rate so customary as to seem necessary—for a young peer, on presenting himself, to have some friend's support. He had therefore written to Lord Carlisle to say that he should be of age at the opening of the session. The hint at desire for an introduction was plain, and, despite the glacial nature of their intercourse, he had confidently expected the mere courtesy of an offer to be with him. A note arrived from Carlisle: it acquainted him with the technical etiquette of the occasion—and that was all.

Byron already conceived himself to have reason for resentment against his former guardian. *Hours of Idleness*, in its second edition (with the altered title of *Poems Original and Translated*), had been dedicated to "The Right Honourable Frederick, Earl of Carlisle . . . by his Obliged Ward and Affectionate Kinsman". Mr. Prothero thinks that Carlisle may never have seen the dedication; but, however that may be, Carlisle *had* seen and acknowledged a copy of the privately-printed Juvenilia in 1807. He had written before opening the book—a method often recommended for recipients of "authors' copies", though its artifice should be transparent for all but the very ingenuous. Byron, of course, had seen through it from the first. No further tribute had come; and now, in conveying his hope for a friendly face and hand at his first appearance in the Lords', he had felt himself to be giving Carlisle a last chance—though indeed a further test was (unavoidably) to be afforded the "proud Grandee", and was to be used in the wonted manner.

This was concerned with the same business. To enable the sixth Baron Byron to take his seat in the House of Lords, it was essential to procure affidavits of his grandfather's marriage with Miss Sophia Trevanion, which had been celebrated in the private chapel of Carhais in Cornwall. No certificates[1] were to be found, so affidavits became indispensable. There was difficulty in procuring evidence, and it was thought that Carlisle, whose mother had been Admiral Byron's sister, might be able to give some. Possibly, as Mr. Prothero suggests, he had none to give—but of his "refusal" (the word is Moore's, as well as Byron's) "to afford any explanation respecting the family", one cannot help suspecting that the manner left something to be desired. True, he was ailing[2]; true also that within the last few years, he had heard little to gratify him—rigidly reformed rake as he was!—of his young cousin, already depreciated in favour by that troublesome mother; but when every point in Carlisle's favour is weighed, there remains a repugnant impression of frigidity and priggishness—the more repugnant too in him, because his own investiture of virtue had been so tardy.

By March 13, however, the proofs of the marriage were obtained without his aid. On that day, Dallas (who was occupied in seeing the Satire through the press) happened to pass down St. James's Street—Byron's quarters were at No. 8—and saw his "chariot" at the door. Dallas had had no intention of calling, but this induced him to go in, and he found his host

[1] "Before Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act, the records of . . . regular marriages celebrated in private chapels were kept so carelessly that it was no uncommon thing for people to be without legal evidence of their wedlock" (Jeaffreson, p. 125).

[2] But Mr. Prothero, his apologist, merely says "it is certain that in 1809 he was ill" . . . a vague date!

somewhat pale and agitated. "I am going to take my seat in the Lords'", said he. "I am glad you happened to come in; perhaps you will go with me?" "I expressed", says Dallas, "my readiness to attend him; while at the asme time I concealed the shock I felt on thinking that this young man, who by birth, fortune and talent, stood high in life, should have lived so unconnected and neglected by persons of his own rank that there was not a single member of the senate to which he belonged, to whom he could or would apply to introduce him in a manner becoming his birth. I saw that he felt the situation, and I fully partook his indignation".

They drove down to the House, which was very empty. Lord Eldon, the Lord Chancellor, was going through some ordinary business. Byron looked (thought Dallas, watching him in the sympathy which was so keen yet tactful all through the poignant incident) "even paler than before; and he certainly wore a countenance in which mortification was mingled with, but subdued by, indignation". After the oaths had been administered, the Lord Chancellor left his seat and went towards the novice with a smile, putting out his hand to welcome him. "Byron made a stiff bow, and put the tips of his fingers into the Lord Chancellor's hand". The overture so repulsed was not continued; Eldon went back to his place, and Byron, carelessly seating himself for form's sake, remained but a minute or two in the assembly of which he was now a member. . . . Dallas had not been able to hear anything of what the Lord Chancellor and he said to one another. What had passed was an apology from the former for the delay caused by legal demands—the certificates, affidavits, and so forth. "These forms are part of my *duty*", Eldon had murmured. "Pray do not apologise", the pale and

angry-eyed young stranger had replied. "Your Lordship . . . did your *duty*, and you did *no more*".

On rejoining Dallas, Byron did not speak of this. He merely said, on hearing his friend's regret at the repulsion of Eldon's advance, "If I had shaken hands heartily, he would have set me down for one of his party —but I will have nothing to do with any of them, on either side". They went back to his rooms. He was terribly dejected. The one prospect that he clung to seemed to be the foreign trip; even the Satire had for the moment lost interest for him. In a day or two he returned to Newstead—there to remain, in what frame of mind we may conjecture, until the success of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* brought him to town.

His original intention had been to insert a compliment to his guardian.

> "Lords too are Bards: such things at times befall,
> And 'tis some praise in Peers to write at all.
> Yet, did or Taste or Reason sway the times,
> Ah! who would take their titles with their rhymes?
> On *one* alone Apollo deigns to smile,
> And crowns a new Roscommon in Carlisle".

But Dallas, uncompromisingly sincere, had written in a spirit of pure criticism to protest against this. "I agree that there is only *one* among the peers on whom Apollo deigns to smile; but, believe me, that peer is no *relation* of yours". Byron acquiesced so far as to alter, but the alteration still was kind. On his twenty-first birthday (January 22, 1809) he received[1] from Carlisle the letter which has been described; and between the twenty-fifth of the same month and the second week in

[1] Dallas, *Recollections*, 1824, pp. 16, 17.

February, the following lines were written (to be added after, "Ah! who would take their titles with their rhymes?"):

"Roscommon! Sheffield! with your spirits fled
No future laurels deck a noble head;
No Muse will cheer, with renovating smile,
The paralytic puling of Carlisle.[1]
The puny schoolboy and his early lay
Men pardon, if his follies pass away;
But who forgives the Senior's ceaseless verse,
Whose hairs grow hoary as his rhymes grow worse?
What heterogeneous honours deck the Peer!
Lord, rhymester, *petit-maître*, pamphleteer!
So dull in youth, so drivelling in his age,
His scenes alone had damned our sinking stage;
But Managers for once cried, 'Hold, enough!'
Nor drugged their audience with the tragic stuff".

There was a further allusion later in the poem, and to this Byron appended a prose note:

"It may be asked, why I have censured the Earl of Carlisle, my guardian and relative, to whom I dedicated a volume of puerile poems a few years ago? The guardianship was nominal, at least as far as I have been able to discover; the relationship I cannot help, and am very sorry for it; but as his Lordship seemed to forget it on a very essential occasion to me, I shall not burden my memory with the recollection. . . . I have heard that some persons conceive me to be under obligations to Lord Carlisle; if so, I shall be most particularly happy to learn what they are, and when conferred, that they may be duly appreciated and publicly acknowledged".[2]

[1] Carlisle suffered from a nervous disorder, and Byron was informed that some readers had scented an allusion in the words, "paralytic puling". "I thank Heaven", he wrote in his diary, "I did not know it; and would not, could not, if I had. I must naturally be the last person to be pointed on defects or maladies".

[2] This note, which appeared in the first edition, was an unmistakable clue to the authorship; but the "anonymity" was not meant to be preserved, and indeed never for a moment really existed.

Such was his revenge. It was a stinging one, and he was to repent of it in later years. "Much too savage . . . the provocation was not sufficient to justify such acerbity". When he wrote that *mea culpa*, he was twenty-eight—but the provocation had been shown to an unfriended, sensitive, and passionate boy of twenty-one. I question if any of us wishes a pang away from Frederick, Earl of Carlisle, as he read, or listened to, the "acerbity".[1]

Byron spent a short time in London, at Batt's Hotel, Jermyn Street, collecting the miniatures of his school-friends, and sitting for his own portrait in oils to George Sanders; then he returned to the Abbey to arrange the second edition[2] of *English Bards* for the press, and to entertain at last a small party of intimates. Charles Skinner Matthews and Hobhouse were the prominent guests; there were seven or eight altogether, including the "occasional presence of a neighbouring parson". From the starry youth of Cambridge, we have a highly diverting description (written to his sister on May 22, 1809) "of the singular place I have lately quitted". There is first a picture of the Abbey from the architectural standpoint. "Fancy all this surrounded with bleak and barren hills, with scarce a tree to be seen for miles . . . and you will have some idea of Newstead. . . . But if the place itself appear rather strange to you, the

[1] Byron's *amende* in *Childe Harold* (iii. 29–30) is well known. Carlisle's third son, the Hon. Frederick Howard, fell at Waterloo.

> "Yet one I would select from that proud throng,
> Partly because they blend me with his line,
> And *partly that I did his sire some wrong*".

(See *Poems*, ii. 233, and note at end of canto.)

The third canto of *Childe Harold* was published on November 18, 1816. Lord Carlisle lived until 1825.

[2] He added nearly four hundred lines, and to this edition his name was prefixed.

FROM AN ENGRAVING BY W. FINDEN AFTER THE PAINTING BY G. SANDERS, 1809

ways of the inhabitants will not appear much less so. Ascend, then, with me the hall-steps . . . but have a care how you proceed . . . for, should you make any blunder —should you go by the right of the hall-steps, you are laid hold of by a bear; and should you go to the left, your case is still worse, for you run full against a wolf! Nor, when you have attained the door, is your danger over; for the hall being decayed, and therefore standing in need of repair, a bevy of inmates are very probably banging at one end of it with their pistols; so that if you enter without giving loud notice of your approach, you have only escaped the wolf and the bear to expire by the pistol-shots of the merry monks of Newstead".

The merry monks got up at one o'clock, most of them. Matthews, appearing between eleven and twelve, was "esteemed a prodigy of early rising". Breakfast finally ended at about half-past two; then they would read or fence or play shuttlecock in the "great room", or practise with pistols in the hall, or walk, ride, play cricket, sail on the lake, play with the bear, tease the wolf. Dinner was between seven and eight, "and our evening lasted till one, two, or three in the morning. The evening discussions may be easily conceived".

At dinner, the famous Skull-Cup was handed round, filled with Burgundy. This was a skull which the gardener, in digging, had turned up in the grounds. It was of great size and in a perfect state of preservation. "A strange fancy", said Byron to Medwin, "seized me of having it set and mounted as a drinking-cup. I accordingly sent it to town, and it returned with a very high polish, and of a mottled colour like tortoiseshell".[1]

[1] It is still to be seen at Newstead Abbey. He wrote some "Lines to be inscribed on a cup formed from a Skull", which did not appear until the seventh edition of *Childe Harold*, though they are now included among the Juvenilia. They are dated "Newstead Abbey, 1808".

Probably the guests drank from the revolting goblet, for their whims were many and foolish. They took the trouble of dressing in the costume of the old monks at dinner—Byron posing as the Abbot; and one night, passing down the Long Gallery where stood a stone coffin, Hobhouse heard a hollow groan. He went nearer; a cowled figure rose from the coffin and blew out his candle. "It was Matthews". . . . But they had more brilliant moments, and in these we may be sure that Matthews played the star-part. There was no one like him in Byron's estimation; "all other men were pigmies to him"; "there was the mark of an immortal creature in everything he did". Not good-tempered (as Byron himself was not), the prestige of Matthews nevertheless made any amount of "managing" worth while. During the visit, he and Hobhouse quarrelled, and he threatened to throw the latter out of a window. This, for some obscure reason, so offended Hobhouse that he left the house next morning. Evidently he came back, for when the party finally broke up, he and Matthews, who were by that time wholly reconciled, "agreed, for a whim, to *walk together* to town". They quarrelled again on the way, and walked the latter half of the journey, "occasionally passing and re-passing", without once addressing one another. . . .

When, in *Childe Harold*, Byron described the home of that pestilent young man as a "monastic dome condemned to uses vile"—and added:

> "Where Superstition once had made her den,
> Now Paphian girls were known to sing and smile",

he was enjoying his favourite game of "inverted hypocrisy". Dallas, who always believed him when he was in the mystifying mood, has recorded that on leaving for the Albanian tour, he "broke up his

harems". The truth is (as Moore points out) that Byron could not possibly have afforded any such "Oriental luxuries". But what he could, and (by Moore's admission) did, afford in that direction was certainly not more admirable, and was much less picturesque. It could not have added a stanza to the poem—nor, if it could, have added the ever-desired shudder to the effect. For the Paphian girls were the women-servants, and on such enchantresses Society did not deign to frown.

Soon afterwards he started on his Albanian tour. A large sum of money was borrowed, partly by means of a life insurance; Rochdale, he told Hanson, might be sold in his absence, but never Newstead: "were my head as grey and defenceless as the Arch of the Priory, I would abide by this resolution". It was in blackest mood that he made his preparations for the journey. "Allow me to depart from this cursed country, and I promise to turn Mussulman rather than return to it". He was persuaded that he had drunk the cup of dissipation to the bottom, that there was nothing left for him to see through in the world of "pleasure". Yet it is no overstatement of the case to say that he was ignorant of every seduction of the senses save such as have been briefly indicated—the attractions of a vulgar *fille-de-joie*, and of his women-servants. Nothing, however, could have convinced Byron that his experience —merely because it *was* his—was not all-embracing. Read his comment on the early poems and the two first cantos of *Childe Harold*—a comment made when he was thirty-three. "[They] are the thoughts of one at least ten years older than the age at which they were written—I don't mean for their solidity, but their experience". And then, let any "experienced" man (nay, woman) turn to those early poems and those two first

cantos, and, reading them with that remark in mind, preserve a serious countenance!

This belief—that he must, by the very nature of his being, run through the gamut of experience, that no one could either outdo him, or present a wider compass to the fingers of the Fates—is one of the great simplicities of Byron's character. It is part of his supreme self-consciousness, which, again, is part of his supreme unreserve. We shall find, as we go on, that to keep this in mind, to realise how vitally his vanity was bound up with his sufferings (real or imaginary) will help us at once to forgive him, and to refuse him any extreme of sympathy.

CHAPTER IX

CHILDE HAROLD'S FIRST PILGRIMAGE—1809–1811

Byron's duality—Black moods—Delawarr's desertion—Farewell to Mrs. Byron—Embarkation—*Childe Harold*—The prose aspect of the Pilgrimage—Spanish conquests—*The Girl of Cadiz*—Mrs. Spencer Smith: "Florence"—John Galt, and his book on Byron—Zitza—Visit to Ali Pasha—The Pasha's galliot—Greece—"The Maid of Athens"—The Swim—Etiquette—Hobhouse goes home—Athens again—Lord Sligo, and *The Giaour*—Return to England

CHILDE HAROLD was called, in the MS. of the first canto, Childe "Burun", which was the old Norman rendering of Byron; yet after the poem was published with the altered name, his creator was strenuous to deny any identity. As Dallas told him, however, "the not identifying yourself with the travelling Childe is a wish not possible to realise". And, paradoxical as it may sound, the fact that Harold is not an accurate portrait of Byron merely makes the resemblance more complete. One of his most characteristic sequences was the perpetual revelation to the world of his idea of himself, and the annoyance which he never failed to express (and indeed to feel) at that world's credulity—for the idea was of course devoutly hailed as the reality. This sequence grew out of the uncertainty of touch to which I have already alluded. The ambition and the pusillanimity of his vanity were for ever at war with each other—the one

driving him, in fancy, to flagrant revolt against convention, the other bending him, in actual life, meekly before it. There is something tragic in his perpetual battle with this duality, which is the real problem, as I think, of his character. That other duality of gaiety and gloom, which has drawn upon his head the epithet "chameleon", needs but an elementary knowledge of human nature to remove it from the region of the abnormal, exaggerated though it was in him—in whom, for that matter, everything was exaggerated. In Byron, not a letter but is, so to speak, in capitals and double capitals: he is so typical as to be almost mythical. And this has always seemed to me the reason for his immense popularity. Every one got something from him. The intellectuals retrieved the puzzle-period of their nonage, and sighed and smiled together in recognition of their "old footsteps meeting them"; while the general reader, enthralled (like the others) by his passionate vitality, snatched as well the fearful joy of being shocked.

He spent some weeks in London before his departure. Dallas, who was with him almost every day, found him in a mood of "bitter discontent". "Resentment, anger, and disgust held full sway over him, and his greatest gratification . . . was overcharging his pen with gall, which flowed in every direction against individuals, his country, the world, the universe, Creation, and the Creator". It was during these dark hours that Lord Delawarr's desertion (already alluded to[1]) took place. They had had their portraits—probably miniatures by Sanders—painted, framed, and "surmounted with their respective coronets", and these were to be exchanged as parting gifts; but before the transaction was

[1] See Chapter III.

completed, Delawarr began to display that aloofness which was to culminate in the famous Visit to the Milliner's.

On the day before Byron left London, Dallas called, and found him "bursting with indignation". "Will you believe it?" he cried. "I have just met Delawarr, and asked him to come and sit for an hour with me; he excused himself; and what do you think was his excuse? He was engaged with his mother and some ladies to go shopping! And he knows I set out to-morrow, to be absent for years, perhaps never to return! Friendship! I do not believe I shall leave behind me, yourself and family excepted, and perhaps my mother, a single being who will care what becomes of me". The remembrance rankled long. In the notes to the second canto of *Childe Harold*, written after his return, he took occasion to compare the English nobleman, greatly to his disadvantage, with an Albanian servant who had wept bitterly at their parting. Could anything be more Byronic? One can imagine the scorn with which the handsome, frivolous, but quite amiable, Delawarr must have commented—for of course he read *Childe Harold* like the rest of his world—on the parallel. "Did he expect *me* to behave like a savage?" Certainly, as Harness said, the strain was great; and Delawarr had from the first honestly accepted, and tried to make his friend accept, his own inadequacy.

Byron said no good-bye to the mother whose solicitude he so oddly—and be it said, for all her faults, so unjustly—doubted. From Falmouth, on the 22nd of June, he wrote her his farewell. The violent, unhappy woman[1] must have read it with an aching heart. He was to be absent for years, "perhaps" (as he said

[1] There had been a terrible scene between them when he had last been with her.

himself) "never to return"—yet these are the words she had before her:

"I am about to sail in a few days; probably before this reaches you. . . . I leave England without regret, and without a wish to revisit anything it contains, except yourself and your present residence.—Believe me, yours ever sincerely" . . .

He was her only child—nay, the one creature now in all the world who in any sense belonged to her, and he was setting out upon a journey in those days highly adventurous. . . . He wrote to her often from the distant lands; but at the end, that good-bye letter must have haunted the soul of each—for Mrs. Byron never saw her son again.

Augusta was left without a farewell, even by letter; since the encounter with Lord Carlisle, she, intimate as she was with the "proud grandee", had been cut out of his heart. She was now married and a mother;[1] he had not written to her since the December of 1808, and he did not write to her again until a month after his return to England in 1811.

But Hobhouse was going with him, and Dallas, *vice* Delawarr, was the companion of his last day in town. On June 11 he went down to Falmouth; and thence, in the days immediately before he sailed, wrote two letters besides the good-bye to his mother. One was to Henry Drury, the other to Francis Hodgson. Hodgson got the pick of the basket: a list of fellow-passengers, a burlesque description of Falmouth and its "tway castles, St. Maws and Pendennis, extremely well calculated for annoying everybody except an enemy"; and those verses, "a foretaste of the true Byron", as Henley says:

"Huzza! Hodgson, we are going,
Our embargo's off at last"—

[1] She married her first cousin, Colonel Leigh, in 1807.

in which Hobhouse figures unforgettably as a sea-sick poet, equally oppressed by his breakfast and his verses. No more striking example of the difference between the real and the self-imagined Byron is to be found than this production, enclosed as it was in a letter ending with the words: "I am like Adam, the first convict sentenced to transportation, but I have no Eve, and have eaten no apple but what was sour as a crab;—and thus ends my first chapter".

The influence of the Albanian tour upon his mind and work impairs its value, in a measure, as biographical material. Since he tells all in verse, we well may blush to recapitulate that all in prose. The reading of *Childe Harold* (to say nothing of the narrative poems which followed it, and no less grew out of the experience) is the accompanying Byron step by step in this the first adventure of his body and soul. The poem is, as Mr. Ernest Coleridge has said, "a rhythmical diorama". Crammed with faults as it is (and as every first work of genius has ever been; one hopes, will ever be)—I find it hard to believe that anybody coming to it for the first time can escape an attack of the primal "Byron fever". There are things in it that thrill to the heart's core, and seem as if they must discover that heart's core in every one, no matter what his intellectual calibre; though there is, perhaps, one element which robs it of such universality of appeal. He saw the scenes, the men, the manners, that from childhood[1] he had dreamed of seeing, and his spirit sang aloud. There is no stronger note in *Childe Harold* than that of this peculiar form of personal exultation: "I—here, at last!" Not all of us are its thralls; but when one who is can utter it, the brother-

[1] "All travels, or histories, or books upon the East I could meet with, I had read . . . before I was *ten years old*" (written by Byron in his copy of d'Israeli's *Literary Character*. Moore, p. 119).

hood hails a king, while those outside discern merely an ingenuous if diverting fellow. So it happens that for one, *Childe Harold* shall come bringing treasure not to be sagely reckoned; while by another the true beauties only shall be perceived, and nothing missed of what is wise—though something, it may be, of what is heavenly-foolish. To give the example which best displays this effect: in the midst of a rhapsody upon the Spanish women, he breaks with absolute inconsequence into the great apostrophe to Parnassus! It is all wrong; yet to many the "sudden glory" flashed on the mind by such spontaneity will turn the critical preoccupation with form into a sudden absurdity. Most true it is that Byron, "never a great artist, was over and over again a great poet". He did not so much write great poetry as *be* a great poet; indeed, one might almost say that one of his functions was to show us what bad poetry a great poet can write. It is like a convulsion of nature—the volcano flinging lava; out of the course, "eccentric", and yet, beyond all cavilling, from the centre.

But there was prose as well as poetry in his travels. The diffidence of which I have spoken may not be wholly indulged, since if we wish to see him as he really was, we must fix our gaze on Byron as well as on the Childe. And so, here follow some of the "trivial particulars". To quote a latter-day adventurer: "The way things happen generally turns out to be at least more amusing than the way they were meant to happen";[1] and Byron, who had meant to sail for Malta, about which, when he did go there, he found nothing worth recording,[2] sailed

[1] Charles Marriott, *A Spanish Holiday*, chap. i. p. 1, Methuen, 1908.

[2] Such record as he gave it is in the lines to Mrs. Spencer Smith to which I shall shortly refer, and in the lively doggerel, "Farewell to Malta", which

instead for Portugal, about which he found a great deal. He did not like Lisbon, yet was "very happy" there, "because I loves oranges, and talks bad Latin to the monks . . . and goes into society . . . and swims in the Tagus all across at once, and I rides on an ass or a mule, and swears Portuguese". They rode—but not on mules or asses—the "nearly five hundred miles" to Seville and Cadiz; and at Seville, where he lingered but three days, adventures in one sort began. To his mother, of all possible correspondents, he recounted the first. It was concerned with locks of hair, and with "an offer, which my *virtue* induced me to decline". His refusal produced a laugh, and the information that "she was going to be married to an officer in the Spanish army". "When a woman marries", he explains in this singular filial confidence, "she throws off all restraint. . . . If you make a proposal which in England would produce a box on the ear from the meekest of virgins, to a Spanish girl, she thanks you for the honour you intend her, and replies, 'Wait till I'm married, and I shall be too happy'. This is literally and strictly true".

Cadiz, though "a complete Cythera",[1] produced something more decorous. He went to the opera with Admiral Cordova's family—"an aged wife and a fine

was written on his return sojourn there in 1811, but not published until 1816 (see *Poems*, iii. 24).

> "[I'll] only stare from out my casement,
> And ask 'for what is such a place meant?'"

[1] At Cadiz, or soon after leaving it, he wrote the gay, spirited verses entitled *The Girl of Cadiz*, which were originally inserted after stanza 86, canto i. of *Childe Harold*. In this, the Childe is represented as struggling "'gainst the Demon's [melancholy's] sway". It was a singularly successful struggle which resulted in such high-hearted singing! "The inconsistency was seen in time", says Mr. Coleridge: *The Girl of Cadiz* was suppressed in favour of the verses *To Inez* which now follow stanza 86. This lyric, with its "settled, ceaseless gloom", was not written until

daughter . . . very pretty, in the Spanish style". There were also the inevitable little brother, and an aunt or duenna. Señorita Cordova dispossessed this last of her chair in front of the box, and commanded Byron to take it. "She proposed to become my preceptress in the Spanish language"; and it was either to her or to one of the more enterprising ladies of the place (or of Seville), that, in his own delightful phrase, he "made earnest love with the help of a dictionary". It can hardly have been Señorita Cordova who set her heart on a ring he wore, and insisted on his giving it to her. "That could not be"; he offered anything else, but nothing else would do. Both grew angry, and they angrily parted. The ring, a valuable yellow diamond, went with him to Malta (whither he soon sailed), but at Malta left his possession, coveted and demanded there also by a more potent charmer.

This was the Mrs. Spencer Smith—the "Florence" of *Childe Harold* and of two or three short lyrics—whose adventures with the Marquis de Salvo "form one of the prettiest romances in the Italian language". She had somehow managed in 1806 to incur the special enmity of Napoleon, and from this distinction had issued the chapter in her life which now captivated Byron's fancy.

January 25, 1810. Truly we are behind the scenes to-day, and can watch, with attentive and admiring amusement, the "make-up" of the Byronic hero.

"Through many a clime 'tis mine to go,
With many a retrospection curst;
And all my solace is to know,
Whate'er betides, I've known the worst.

What is that worst? Nay, do not ask—
In pity from the search forbear;
Smile on—nor venture to unmask
Man's heart, and view the Hell that's there".

. . . . . .

And now, let the reader find *The Girl of Cadiz*, actual production of the moment!

There was everything in it — imprisonment, tears, platonics, post-chaise, boy's disguise, a rope-ladder;[1] and, above all, a heroine with golden hair, lissom form ("like the apparition in an exquisite dream", said the Duchesse d'Abrantès), and lovely short-sighted eyes which gazed on men with bewildered and bewildering vagueness. Plainly the duty of somebody to fall in love; but should it be Byron or Harold? It was Byron—and to key up an affair somewhat flattened by its obviousness, he had the really brilliant inspiration of posing the Childe as cold.

> "Fair Florence found, in sooth with some amaze,
> One who, 'twas said, still sighed to all he saw,
> Withstand, unmoved, the lustre of her gaze";

but she prevailed upon the "marble heart" to the extent at any rate of three lyrics—and the yellow diamond ring. Both Moore and Galt believe in the remoteness; and indeed the lady was already a laureate in the school of platonics. The Marquis de Salvo had been, before he asked, nobly repulsed: "I must warn you, in our mutual interest, that my principles and my outlook on life are wholly opposed to what you doubtless hope for as your reward".[2] De Salvo had been, for his part, nobly wounded by her suspicion, and in fact his chivalry was without alloy; they parted, when her rescue had been accomplished, as they had set out—the very Knight and Lady of romance.

What Florence[3] may have thought of the *Harold* stanzas is another question. In them her virtue is less insisted on than the Childe's obduracy—a turn of which Byron alone was capable; while the lines which

[1] The story is told in detail by the Marquis de Salvo (*Travels in the Year 1806*) and by the Duchesse d'Abrantès (*Mémoires*, xv. 1–74).

[2] Duch. d'Abrantès, *Mémoires*, xv. 13–14.

[3] Her actual Christian name was Constance.

sum up the episode are unqualifiable in any measured language.

> "'Tis an old lesson—Time approves it true,
> And those who know it best, deplore it most;
> *When all is won that all desire to woo,*
> *The paltry prize is hardly worth the cost*".

The yellow diamond can hardly have seemed a redemption of such a generality, appended as it was to an explicit allusion. Florence must have realised what most women realised: that once "that lovely, harmless[1] thing" entered the story, Byron's baseness, sooner or later, inevitably proclaimed itself. . . . At Athens in 1810 the final word was said:

> "The spell is broke, the charm is flown!"

—Florence disappeared, and the Maid of Athens took her place.

But before Athens, before even Malta, a delightful personage claims our attention. This is John Galt, author of two novels whose names still survive.[2] In 1830 he published his *Life of Byron*, in the eighth chapter of which occurs a passage that should live while the name of its subject lives. Its picturesqueness is equalled by its eccentricity, yet nothing else that has been written of Byron's effect comes anywhere near it in bringing that effect home. I make no apology for quoting: the glee of Galt's every reader is assured.

They had met at Gibraltar, and embarked together for Sardinia, Cagliari, and Malta. Galt, without knowing who he was, had seen Byron in the garrison library at Gibraltar, and had been particularly impressed by a recurrent frown, which he first thought an affectation "for picturesque effect and energetic expression"; but

[1] It is amusing to note, in the MS., that he was uncertain whether to use this epithet, or its opposite.

[2] *Annals of the Parish* and *The Entail.*

afterwards discovered to be "undoubtedly the occasional scowl of some unpleasant reminiscence". Meeting him next day on board the packet, the frown again intrigued Galt, who by this time knew that its owner was Lord Byron. "I suspected him of pride and irascibility. The impression that evening was not agreeable, but it was interesting". Hobhouse made himself at home at once; "but Byron held aloof, and sat on the rail, leaning on the mizzen shrouds, inhaling, as it were, poetical sympathy from the gloomy rock". He was wayward and petulant: "ill at ease with himself and fretful towards others". But there was something redeeming in his voice, and Galt was soon convinced that instead of being ill-natured, he was only capricious. About the third day, he "relented from his rapt mood". They landed at Cagliari in Sardinia, and were invited to dinner by Mr. Hill, the ambassador. "On this occasion, Byron and his Pylades dressed themselves as aides-de-camp—a circumstance which . . . did not tend to improve my estimation of the solidity of the character of either". And then Galt sums up the transit to Malta. It is here that the unforgettable passage occurs. "If my remembrance is not treacherous, he only spent one evening in the cabin with us . . . for, when the lights were placed, he made himself a man forbid, took his station on the railing . . . and there, for hours, sat in silence, enamoured, it may be, of the moon. All these peculiarities, with his caprices, and something inexplicable in the cast of his metaphysics, while they seemed to awaken interest, contributed little to conciliate esteem. He was often strangely rapt—it may have been from his genius; and, had its grandeur and darkness been then divulged, susceptible of explanation; but, at the time, it threw around him, as it were, the sackcloth of penitence. Sitting amidst the shrouds

and railings, in the tranquillity of the moonlight, churming an inarticulate melody, he seemed almost apparitional, suggesting dim reminiscences of him who shot the albatross. *He was as a mystery in a winding-sheet, crowned with a halo*".

If Byron had but known that this was the effect he was producing, the passage from Gibraltar to Malta would have been one of the happiest moments of his life. Galt, shrewdly observant and sceptical as he was, showed himself nevertheless the most sensitive plate for the Byronic image which that image ever found. No wonder that the novels survive: an observer of such keenness, joined to such extraordinary receptivity for the desired impression, must have drawn vital characters.[1]

The whole account of their short journeying together abounds with these illuminating *aperçus*, these ludicrous yet delightful phrases. Byron thanks somebody for his hospitality "with more elocution than was precisely requisite", and Hobhouse laughs at him. "But Byron really fancied that he had acquitted himself with grace and dignity", and "became petulant". Hobhouse walked on; the poet, on account of his lameness, took Galt's arm, and appealed for praise. Galt was inclined to agree with the censor (unsympathetic as ever for exuberance!), but "as his lordship's comfort, at the moment, seemed dependent on being confirmed in the good opinion he was desirous to entertain of his own graces", Galt "civilly assented". He was taken into favour from that night onward; "and, as [Byron] was always most agreeable and interesting when familiar, it was worth my while to advance, but by cautious circumvallation, into his intimacy; for his uncertain

[1] Byron himself said of the *Annals of the Parish* and *The Entail* that the characters had "an identity that reminded him of Wilkie's pictures" (Lady Blessington's, *Conversations*, p. 74).

temper made his favour precarious". The next day the "passengers partook of the blessings of peace. . . . Byron was in the highest spirits; overflowing with glee, and sparkling with quaint sentences. The champagne was uncorked, and in the finest condition". Hobhouse had been "forgiven", and had accepted the situation, for, as he remarked to Galt, "it was necessary to humour him like a child".

Byron's impression of the new acquaintance was told, many years afterwards, to Lady Blessington. "When I knew Galt . . . I was not in a frame of mind to form an impartial opinion of him; his mildness and equanimity struck me even then; but, to say the truth, his manner had not deference enough for my then aristocratical taste, and finding I could not awe him into a respect sufficiently profound for my sublime self, either as a peer or an author, I felt a little grudge towards him that has now completely worn off".

They parted at Malta, not to meet again until the February of 1810 in Athens. In the meantime, Byron and Hobhouse penetrated to the interior of Albania, where Ali Pasha, the "Mahometan Buonaparte", then reigned. They stayed three days at Yanina, leaving on October 11 to ride through the mountains to Zitza, that "small but favoured spot of holy ground" on the way to Tepeleni, whose situation Byron considered to be the finest without exception in Greece. As they were approaching the village in the evening, Hobhouse and two others rode forward, leaving Byron to follow with the baggage and servants, among whom was his English valet, Fletcher. Just as the advance-guard reached Zitza, rain began to pour in torrents (they had, in fact, undertaken their Albanian adventure a month too early in the year, and suffered from bad weather most of the time); and by seven o'clock the storm had developed

into "a fury I had never before", says Hobhouse,[1] "and indeed have never since, seen equalled". Byron and his party were within three miles of the village when it began, yet they did not arrive until two o'clock in the morning. They had lost their way amid the mountains; the luggage-horses had fallen; they had been exposed to the tempest for nine hours; the guides had run away, the dragoman had fired after them with his pistols, and Fletcher—true to the part of the average English servant in such emergencies—had contributed to the occasion nothing but terrors and tears. "His eyes", wrote Byron afterwards, "were a little hurt by the lightning, or crying—I don't know which".

"It was long", says Hobhouse, "before we ceased to talk of the thunderstorm in the plain of Zitza"; and the adventure — really a considerable one — inspired Byron with the *Stanzas composed during a Thunderstorm* (he affirmed that they really were) in which "sweet Florence" was remembered and apostrophised. The lines relating to her alone redeem the effort from something worse than mediocrity.

"Do thou, amidst the fair white walls,
If Cadiz yet be free,
At times, from out her latticed halls,
Look o'er the dark blue sea;

Then think upon Calypso's isles,
Endear'd by days gone by;
To others give a thousand smiles,
To me a single sigh".

. . . . . .

After a nine days' journey they reached Tepeleni, where Ali Pasha then was, and the much-described[2]

[1] J. C. Hobhouse, *A Journey through Albania*, second edition, 1813, p. 81.

[2] *Childe Harold*, ii. 56–64. Letter to Mrs. Byron, *L. and J.* i. 249–51; and Hobhouse's soberer description, *A Journey in Albania*, letter xi. 109–25.

visit to him took place. Nothing in the event delighted Byron more than a remark of Ali (how often quoted in the letters home!) that "he was sure I was a man of birth, because I had small ears, curling hair, and little white hands". Twenty times a day did the Pasha send "his son" tribute of almonds, sugared sherbet, fruit, and sweetmeats; and there were three more meetings between them. "It is singular that the Turks . . . pay so much respect to birth; for I found my pedigree more regarded than my title". Thus many vanities were gratified; nor did Ali forget his visitor, for when a Dr. Howard, travelling in Albania some years later, told the Pasha of *Childe Harold*, "he seemed pleased, and stated his recollections of Lord Byron".

After a stay at Prevesa, sailing thence to Patras in a galliot of the Pasha, especially provided for them by his orders, they had another ordeal by tempest. The storm was not violent, but their captain was of a peculiar type. First they ran aground in getting out of the harbour; then, in tacking before a fair wind, the mizzen-sail split from top to bottom,—whereupon the captain put the string of beads (called a *comboloio*), with which he had hitherto been absorbed, into his pocket and wrung his hands. Of the forty sailors all except four Greeks were Turkish—and "all the Turkish sailors were sick, and retired below". The breeze was now fresh, they were rolling violently, nobody knew how to steer, "and when the main-yard snapped in two, the guns broke loose, and the foresail split"—it is little wonder that everything was given up for lost. The ship lay like a log on the water, and as they contrived to keep her broadside on to the heavy sea, the danger of swamping was added to all the others. . . . The transit, thus described in the prim narrative of Hobhouse, reads like one made in a nightmare.

"The captain, being asked what he could do, said he could do nothing.

"'Could he get back to the mainland?'

"'If God chooses'.

"'Could he make Corfu?'

"'If God chooses'.

"'Would he give up the management of the vessel to the Greeks?'

"'He would give it up to anybody'".

Fletcher was meanwhile (to turn to Byron's account) "yelling after his wife, the Greeks were calling on all the saints, and the Mussulmans on Allah". Byron undertook Fletcher, and "finding him incorrigible, wrapped myself up in my Albanian capote and lay down on deck to wait the worst". He had tried to be of service, but his lameness disabled him. Hobhouse often told Moore of his singular coolness and courage; for (like Heine in a similar situation) not only did he lie down on the deck, but he went fast asleep. . . . And the whole mad hour was wholly wasted, for they were driven on the coast of Suli at one o'clock in the morning, and had to go by land back to Prevesa, whence they had sailed the day before!

This was on November 11. On November 21 they reached Missolonghi. Moore makes the obvious reflection, which no reader can fail to make for himself. They stayed a fortnight at Patras, and on December 5, on the way to Vostitza, he beheld Parnassus.

> "Oft have I dreamed of Thee! whose glorious name,
> Who knows not, knows not man's divinest lore:
> And now I view thee—'tis, alas, with shame
> That I in feeblest accents must adore.
> When I recount thy worshippers of yore
> I tremble, and can only bend the knee;
> Nor raise my voice, nor vainly dare to soar,
> But gaze beneath thy cloudy canopy,
> In silent joy to think at last I look on thee!"

Later, going to the Fountain of Delphi, he saw above the mountain a flight of twelve eagles ("Hobhouse said they were vultures"); "and I seized the omen. On the day before, I composed the lines to Parnassus, and on beholding the birds, had a hope that Apollo had accepted my homage". This passage is from the *Detached Thoughts* of 1821; but in the Diary of 1813 he recalled the incident in a less romantic vein. Only six eagles, by this account, were seen, and "it was the number, not the species . . . that excited my attention". Following this quaint discrepancy-in-advance is another reminiscence of the same journey which, in its poignant simplicity of narration no less than in the disposition it reveals, is one of those things which incline our hearts to forget his every failing. "The last bird I ever fired at was an *eaglet*, on the shore of the Gulf of Lepanto, near Vostitza. It was only wounded, and I tried to save it, the eye was so bright; but it pined, and died in a few days; and I never did since, and never will, attempt the death of another bird".

On Christmas Eve, 1809, they arrived at a "most miserable and half-deserted village, called Skourta", and passed the night "in the worst hovel of which we had ever been inmates. The cows and pigs occupied the lower part of the chamber, where there were racks and mangers and other appurtenances of a stable".[1] With no desire to be profane, it strikes one as odd that neither Byron nor Hobhouse nor any of the biographers should seem to have felt the dramatic significance of passing Christmas Eve in a place so described. . . . They moved on next day, and at half-past two, "just as we had got to the summit of the mountain overlooking a deep glen, one of our guides called out, '*Affendi, affendi, to chorio!*' (Sir, sir, the town!)". The town was

[1] J. C. Hobhouse *Travels in Albania*, p. 285.

Athens. At half-past eight in the evening of Christmas Day, they entered it.

"Where'er we tread 'tis haunted, holy ground"

—the undying stanzas[1] need no citation.

At Athens they stayed ten weeks, in the house of Madame Theodora Macri, widow of the late English Vice-Consul. Her daughter, Teresa ("sometimes called Thyrza"), eldest of three lovely girls, was the Maid of Athens, whom Byron—and Gounod—have immortalised. That ditty, and the following passage in a letter to Henry Drury, are Byron's only references to her. "I almost forgot to tell you that I am dying for love of three Greek girls at Athens, sisters. I lived in the same house. Teresa, Mariana, and Katinka are the names of these divinities—all of them under fifteen".[2] Moore thought that it was in making love to one of these girls that Byron adopted a custom frequent in that country—"namely, giving himself a wound across the breast with his dagger". The lady, whoever she was, "by his own account, looked on very coldly during the operation, considering it a fit tribute to her beauty, but in no degree moved to gratitude". During this sojourn Hobhouse visited the Negroponte, a trip which took five days (from February 8 to 13). "Lord Byron was unexpectedly detained at Athens"—and this circum-

[1] *Childe Harold*, ii. 87–88.

[2] Three later travellers—Hughes, Walsh, and Williams, all authors of books recording their adventures, and Williams, moreover, an artist of distinction—speak of these girls as the belles of Athens. But Teresa's beauty waned early. In 1820 Hughes "observed the remains only of that loveliness which elicited such strains from an impassioned poet". Walsh, in 1821, said that she had "lost all pretensions to beauty, and had a countenance singularly marked by hopeless sadness". Williams, the artist, was more enthusiastic, but he too noticed the "pensiveness" of the two elder sisters. They were dark; Katinka was fair. Teresa married an Englishman named Black, survived her husband, and fell into great poverty. She died in 1875, aged eighty.

stance Mr. Ernest Coleridge connects, by implication, with the Teresa Macri affair.[1] Hobhouse's tribute to his companion may appropriately be given here. "Any additional defects in the narration of this short tour must be attributed to the absence of a companion who, to quickness of observation and ingenuity of remark, united that gay good-humour which keeps alive the attention under the pressure of fatigue and softens the aspect of every difficulty and danger".

After their ten weeks' stay they were offered a passage in an English sloop-of-war, the *Pylades*, to Smyrna. They accepted it, and on March 5 took leave of Athens with many a backward look, full of the pain of parting. The sojourn at Smyrna is memorable chiefly because the two first cantos of *Childe Harold* were finished there.[2] Nor was Byron the only scribbler. Hobhouse's "woundy preparations for a book" (reported by his friend from Falmouth) had been made in earnest—in such deadly earnest that one fears he can have enjoyed himself, in any other way, but half-heartedly. The book must have obsessed his every moment. It is with a singular mixture of feelings that one turns over the ponderous tomes—they grow steadily more erudite and more unreadable as the places visited grow more interesting—and compares the mental processes simultaneously taking place in the two travellers. The one notes and describes the very pebbles of the highway, and we recoil in mingled irritation, fatigue, and pity; the other utters merely the emotions that compelled his spirit, and compels our own to such sharing as gives the illusion of actual vision. No sharper antithesis between accuracy and truth could be devised. Byron did not

[1] *Poems*, 1904, ii. note to p. 75.

[2] *Childe Harold* had been begun at Yanina, October 31, 1809, and these cantos were completed at Smyrna on March 28, 1810.

know how profoundly he was criticising his friend when, in his letters to Drury and Hodgson, he begs them jestingly, "not to believe one word Hobhouse says, but come for the truth to me". "Facts are not true": the axiom might be supported by the weight of the *Travels in Albania* and *Childe Harold* alone!

Appropriately enough, as I write these words, I find beneath my hand the first mention of the most tedious fact, to me, in the whole life of Byron. "This morning"—let me set up all the paraphernalia and state that this morning was May 3, 1810—"I *swam* from *Sestos* to *Abydos*". He did, and so did Mr. Ekenhead, an officer of the English frigate *Salsette*; and Byron was one hour and ten minutes in the water, and Ekenhead five minutes less; and it was more than four miles, and the current was very strong and cold, and they were "not fatigued, but a little chilled". It was the famous Swim across the Hellespont, and Byron (literally) never after that morning wrote a letter home without describing it. In 1820, one William Turner published a *Journal of a Tour in the Levant*, and the whole question came lumbering up again. Byron sent an interminable letter to John Murray (which occupies five and a half pages of print),[1] and the letter was published in two magazines, and Turner's reply, not printed until after Byron's death (by Turner's own choice), declared that he was "still unshaken in his opinion"—which was, to put it as shortly as possible, that Byron had performed only half Leander's feat, and that the easier half. "And alternatively", as a lawyer would say, that Leander had never performed it. Byron characteristically based his whole case on the fact that Turner had failed to perform either *his* feat or Leander's. . . . I know not if I be blamably feminine in

[1] *L. and J.* v. 246–51. And Appendix: Turner's answer, 601–3.

thinking this the dullest of all possible discussions; but I do think it so, and am incapable of prolonging it any further.

Constantinople was, as the reader will have inferred from the testimony of the Swim, the next place they visited; but there is an anecdote (recorded in Hobhouse's Journal, a far more amusing production than his book) to be offered before we proceed. They had stayed at Smyrna in the house of the Consul-General, a Mr. Werry, and "Mrs. Werry actually cut off a lock of Byron's hair on parting with him to-day (April 11) and shed a good many tears. Pretty well for fifty-six, at least!"[1] They sailed in the *Salsette* frigate, which was bound for Constantinople to convey the English Ambassador, Mr. Adair, to England. Galt had reappeared, both at Athens and Smyrna, and at Smyrna had found Byron "something changed, and not with improvement". He was "less cordial" with Hobhouse, "and was altogether . . . more of a Captain Grand than improved his manners". A striking instance of this occurred at a dinner on the day after Galt's arrival. Byron and one of the officers of the *Salsette* disagreed over politics, and the naval man prevailed. "Lord Byron . . . became reserved, as if he deemed that sullenness enhanced dignity. I never in the whole course of my acquaintance saw him *kithe* [?] so unfavourably as he did on that occasion". He got over it before the party broke up ("his austerity began to leaf"); nevertheless Galt saw then what others saw increasingly as time went on—that "the unchecked humour of his temper was, by its caprices, calculated to

[1] Hobhouse, writing to Byron from Malta, July 31, 1810, says: "Mrs. Bruce picked out a pretty plate of a woman in a fashionable dress in Ackerman's *Repository*, and observed it was vastly like Lord Byron. I give you warning of this, for fear you should make another conquest and return to England without a curl upon your head" (*L. and J.* i. 299).

prevent him from ever gaining that regard to which his talents and freer moods . . . ought to have entitled him. Such men become objects of solicitude, but never of esteem".

In justice to him—and Galt is careful to consider the point—it may be said, on the testimony of a letter from Smyrna to Mrs. Byron, that the negligence of his lawyer was now becoming a serious matter. He was obliged to consider whether he should be able to proceed at all after Constantinople, or even then to return without remittances. In the event money must have arrived, for he stayed abroad another year; but just at this time the uncertainty was awkward and humiliating, and Galt thought that the "false dignity" he assumed, which "seemed so like arrogance", might well be the thing we now call bluff.

An uncomfortable little contretemps marked the stay of two months at Stamboul. Mr. Adair, the Ambassador Extraordinary, now going home, had his farewell audience of the Sultan soon after they arrived, and Byron unluckily got it into his head that he had claims to some sort of precedence. Stratford Canning (afterwards Lord Stratford de Redcliffe) sat near Moore at dinner on May 23, 1819, and in Moore's Journal[1] we read that he "gave a ludicrous account of Lord Byron's insisting on taking precedence of the *corps diplomatique* . . . and, upon Adair's refusing it, limping, with as much swagger as he could muster, up the hall, cocking a foreign military hat on his head. He found, however, he was wrong, and wrote a very frank letter acknowledging it, and offering to take his station anywhere".[2] This jealousy of his rank was "nervously awake" at

[1] Vol. ii. p. 313.

[2] "It took Byron quite three days to get over the trivial contretemps", says Hobhouse's Journal.

Constantinople, says Galt, who considered it one of his greatest weaknesses. That such things "should have so morbidly affected his sensibility" appeared to this observer almost inconceivable; "yet they certainly did so, and even to a ridiculous degree". "But", he gloriously continues, "the alloy of such small vanities, his caprice and feline temper, were as vapour compared with the mass of rich and rare ore which constituted the orb and nucleus of his brilliancy".

An anonymous writer in the *New Monthly Magazine*, quoted by Moore, tells of an encounter at Constantinople which confirms Galt's observations. This traveller was in a pipe-shop, when there entered an Englishman in a scarlet coat richly embroidered with gold, "in the style of an A.D.C.'s uniform". He had with him a janissary and a cicerone. The traveller was much struck by his beauty—his fine blue eyes, remarkably delicate features, and curly auburn hair. Unforgettable, he calls him. A "very visible" lameness proclaimed his identity, for Lord Byron's arrival in the *Salsette* was already known. He had become a great lover of smoking, and was there to buy some pipes; but the difficulty of language—for the cicerone spoke Turkish badly—irritated his traffic with the shopkeeper, and so the stranger, coming forward, addressed him in English. He was delighted, shook hands cordially, and when both had finished their bargaining, they roamed about together for the rest of the day. The traveller frequently addressed Byron by name, and this seemed to cause him no surprise, nor did he hint at any desire for the usual reciprocity. They separated thus, after some hours' wandering. During the next week they met at dinner at the English Ambassador's, and our traveller at once begged a secretary for the formal introduction. He was amazed to find himself freezingly received by his new acquaint-

ance. "He immediately turned his back on me". Some days later they met in the street, and Byron greeted the hesitating victim of his caprice with a beautiful smile! "'I am an enemy', he explained, 'of English etiquette, especially out of England; I always make my own acquaintances without awaiting the formality of an introduction'". The stranger was conquered by the "irresistible attraction" of his manner, and they spent another pleasant, desultory day together. . . . But one cannot avoid a suspicion that it was precisely the detested English etiquette which had brought about the snubbing—that the traveller, obviously of inferior rank as he was, had sinned against that very fetish in being the first to ask for an introduction. And the "old English baron" had risen in his wrath, while the mere gentleman, next day resuscitated, had perceived and redeemed the paltriness.

They left Constantinople on July 14, in the *Salsette*. Hobhouse was going home, and Byron was returning to Athens for a second stay. He was in an extraordinary state of dejection, as Mr. Adair noticed.[1] One day, walking on the deck, he saw a small *yataghan* or Turkish dagger lying on a bench, took it up, unsheathed it, and said to himself in a low voice (which was nevertheless overheard): "I should like to know how a person feels after committing a murder". Both Moore and Galt regard this as a very impressive incident; I cannot agree with them—indeed, their awe appears to me a puerility. Such speculations are the common food of an imaginative mind—silently, it is true, pursued by most; but Byron's moods were seldom inarticulate when they were so admirably scenic as this one.

He was landed, by his own request, on the island of

[1] The depression was noticed at Athens too, by Lady Hester Stanhope's companion, Mr. Bruce.

Zea, a small port near Athens. Here he said farewell to Hobhouse, and "in one of his manuscripts" (says Moore) "he has described the proud, solitary feeling with which he stood to see the ship sail swiftly away —leaving him there, in a land of strangers, alone". Hobhouse's record of the parting is much more human. "*July* 17, 1810.—Arrived at the port of Zea. . . . Took leave, *non sine lacrymis*, of this singular young person on a little stone terrace at the end of the bay, dividing with him a little nosegay of flowers, the last, perhaps, that I shall ever divide with him". Writing from Malta on July 31, Hobhouse was betrayed into a postscript and a sentimentality. "I kept the half of your little nosegay until it withered, and even then I could not bear to throw it away. I can't account for this, nor can you either, I dare say". Byron, answering from Patras on October 4, reveals, even through the medium of pen and ink, a very evident embarrassment. "Your last letter closes pathetically with a postscript about a nosegay; I advise you to introduce that into your sentimental novel. I am sure I did not suspect you of any fine feelings, and I believe you were laughing, but you are welcome".[1] His conscience may have pricked him a little, if he recalled some of his recent gibes at this suddenly revealed devotee. Just before the parting at Zea, he had written to Hodgson (Hobhouse was taking the letter home!) that "twelve months of any given individual was perfect ipecacuanha". Again, to his mother, on July 25: "I am woefully sick of travelling-companions, after a year's experience of Mr. Hobhouse". Yet it would certainly seem from Galt's account that Byron was the "difficult" one of the two.

He fell in at Athens with an old fellow-collegian, the

[1] *L. and J.* i. 305.

Marquis of Sligo, who, in company with Lady Hester Stanhope and Michael Bruce ("the Bruce who was to be one of those to contrive the escape of Lavalette from Paris in 1816"), was one day passing the Piræus when he saw a man jump from the molehead into the sea. He recognised Byron, and called to him to dress and join them. "Thus began", says Mr. Prothero, "what Byron, in his Memoranda, speaks of as 'the most delightful acquaintance which I found in Greece'". Lady Hester Stanhope, niece of the younger Pitt, was then starting on "that uncommon adventure which was to stamp her as one of the most notable women of her time".[1] She inherited from her grandfather, the Great Commoner, many picturesque traits—"pride, generosity, courage, fervent heat, as well as indomitable will";[2] she "ignored the word *impossibility*", and, like most real Romantics, had "insight and practical sagacity" as well. She was on her way at this time to what proved to be her sojourn of twenty-six years among the wild tribes of Lebanon. Moore speaks of the "cordial friendship" between her and Byron; but the direct personal testimony of both is against this view of their intercourse. He thought her overbearing and argumentative: "I despise the sex too much to quarrel with them" . . . while she is represented in her physician's Memoirs of her travels[3] as saying that Byron was a strange character: "one time he was mopish, and nobody was to speak to him; another he was for being jocular with everybody. Then he was a sort of Don Quixote, fighting with the police for a woman of the town; and then he wanted to make himself something great. . . . He had a great deal of vice in his looks —his eyes set close together, and a contracted brow . . .

[1] Henley, p. 354. [2] *L. and J.* i. note to p. 302.
[3] Dr. Meryon, *Memoirs*, 1846, iii. 218–19.

oh, Lord! I am sure he was not a liberal man, whatever else he might be. The only good thing about his looks was this part (drawing her hand under the cheek, down the front of her neck) and the curl on his forehead".

Sligo evidently felt the Byronic spell, for when the new arrival said he was going into the Morea, he was at once implored to let the Marquis go with him. He acquiesced reluctantly, since he was "woefully sick of travelling-companions", but Sligo's ecstasy was inconceivable—so Mrs. Byron heard. Sligo was well enough himself (continued her son), but the swarm of attendants that he carried with him made his society an intolerable annoyance. However, they went as far as Corinth together, and there separated, Sligo for Tripolitza, Byron for Patras—the latter "very glad to be once more alone", for "my nature leads me to solitude, and every day adds to this disposition". "My old seas and mountains", he adds, "are the only acquaintances I ever found improve upon me".

He fell very ill at Patras with malarial fever; five days were spent in bed. There were two doctors, "one of whom trusts to his genius (having never studied) —the other to a campaign of eighteen months against the sick of Otranto, which he made in his youth with great effect". Byron protested against "both these assassins—but what can a helpless, feverish, toasted-and-watered wretch do?" His two Albanian servants, however, seeing the doctors incapable, threatened to cut the throat of the more persistent of the two—one Romanelli —if their master was not cured within a given time. This frightened the man away, and to the threat, "and a resolute refusal of all Romanelli's prescriptions", Byron attributed his recovery.[1]

[1] Recalling this illness, in a discussion on revealed religion with Francis Hodgson soon after his return to England, during a period of deep sorrow

He was still thin and weak when he returned to Athens and met Sligo again. The latter told Moore a little tale about this interesting condition. One day, standing before a looking-glass, he said, "How pale I look! I should like, I think, to die of a consumption". His friend wondered why. "Because then the women would all say, 'See that poor Byron—how interesting he looks in dying!'" . . . Moore narrates this with solemn reflections added, and that he should do so—he who knew the speaker so well!—assists one to understand the long misapprehension of Byron. Was *persiflage* ever more patent? If Sligo reported it seriously, he must have been a dense young man.

Byron was writing regularly to his mother at this time, yet to Sligo it seemed that his feeling for her was "little short of aversion". "Some time or another", he said, "I will tell you why I feel this towards her". A few days later they were bathing together, and Byron, referring to this promise, pointed to his naked leg and foot, and exclaimed: "Look there! It is to her false delicacy at my birth that I owe that deformity; and yet, as long as I can remember, she has never ceased to taunt and reproach me with it. Even a few days before we parted . . . she in one of her fits of passion uttered an

and dejection, he wrote, with reference to his disbelief in the immortality of the soul: "I hope I am sincere; I was so at least on a bed of sickness in a far distant country, when I had neither friend nor comforter nor hope to sustain me. I looked to death as a relief from pain, without a wish for an after-life, but a confidence that the God who punishes in this existence had left that last asylum for the weary". He added, in the Greek, "*He whom God loves dies young*". Francis Hodgson's son, who wrote a Memoir of his father, comments thus on the passage quoted: "It is so sadly and strangely prophetic that its only possible answer is a sorrowful and sympathetic silence" (i. 197–98). Patras is within sight almost of Missolonghi, where, fourteen years later, at thirty-six, Byron was to die of the same type of marsh-fever; and, in view of the "confusion of tongues" by his death-bed, one cannot help speculating on all that might have been averted if the resourceful guardians of 1810 had but been with him in 1824.

imprecation upon me, praying that I might prove as ill-formed in mind as I am in body". Moore adds on his own account: "His look and manner, in relating this frightful circumstance, can be conceived only by those who have seen him in a similar state of excitement".

Sligo's intercourse proved useful at a later period, when in 1813 *The Giaour* was published, and "some gentlewomen of our acquaintance" circulated a story which was "a little too close to the text". There was *some* foundation on facts, but the "real incident was remote enough from the poetical one"; and "to put himself right with his friends or posterity" (says Mr. Coleridge), Byron wrote to Sligo, requesting him to tell what "he had heard at Athens about the affair of the girl who was so near being put an end to while you were there". Sligo wrote a letter which Byron characterised as curious, and which Mr. Coleridge considers inconclusive; it is markedly confined to "all I heard", for the actual facts, whatever they were, had happened a day or two before Sligo arrived at Athens. They were matter of common talk when he did arrive—but common talk is commonly untrustworthy. What "the girl" had actually done is not detailed, but the governor had "the Turkish idea with regard to women", and ordered her to be sewn up in a sack and thrown into the sea. Byron, coming back from bathing, met the procession on its way to execute the order. He immediately interposed,[1] or (as Sligo never fails cautiously to insert) "report said" he did. The men would not obey him; he threatened them with force, but still they refused. Byron then drew a pistol, and said if the leader did not yield and come back to the Aga's house, he would be shot dead. On this the man surrendered; they went

[1] It is plainly to this incident that Lady Hester Stanhope referred (see *ante*).

back; and partly by threats, partly by bribing and entreaty, Byron procured the girl's pardon, on condition of her leaving Athens. "I was told" (continues Sligo) "that you then conveyed her in safety to the convent, and dispatched her at night to Thebes, where she found a safe asylum".

The letter might pass as a very probable clearing-up of the mystery had not Byron, in his Journal of 1813, indulged in some of the many dark hints which that document contains. These would seem to render Sligo's testimony almost valueless, for there is nothing in his story to explain this saying: "I thought it had been *unknown*, and wish it were; but Sligo arrived only some days after, and the *rumours* are the subject of his letter. That I shall preserve—*it is as well.*[1] Lewis and Galt were both *horrified*: and Lewis wondered I did not introduce the situation into *The Giaour*. He *may* wonder; he might wonder more at that production's being written at all. But to describe the *feelings* of *that situation* were impossible—it is *icy* even to recollect them". Again, in a letter of December 15, 1813, he said: "One part (as is often the case) was more singular than any of the Giaour's adventures".[2] To Medwin—if we put any faith in Medwin—he told the tale circumstantially, with himself as the Frankish lover. This was contradicted by Hobhouse,[3] and the lover said to have been his Turkish servant. But Hobhouse was in England at the time of the occurrence; and Byron expressly says in his Journal of 1813 that "H. doesn't know what I was about the year after he left the Levant; nor does any one". Galt asserts that Byron was the cause of the girl's being condemned, but

[1] Byron showed the letter to Galt, Lord Holland, Lewis, Moore, Rogers, and Lady Melbourne; and Murray had a copy.

[2] *L. and J.* ii. 311. [3] *Westminster Review*, January 1825, iii. 27.

his testimony can be of little value; Jeaffreson thinks that the whole thing was a "mystification", and that Byron's connection with the affair was much slighter than Lord Sligo's letter states. "The probability is . . . that he made inquiries in a way that caused him to be confounded in local gossip with the heroic actor in the melodrama". He could not (continues Jeaffreson) affirm on his word of honour that he *had* threatened to shoot the escort, but he liked to pose in "so interesting an attitude", and so bethought him of getting Sligo to recapitulate the "*rumours*". . . . That something sinister happened, we must be certain; what that something was, must be left to the reader's judgment. Byron said on another occasion that he had a great deal of trouble with his servants in the matter of their intercourse with women in that difficult land; and this supports Hobhouse's statement, which seems to me the most probable solution of the "Giaour Mystery".

During this second sojourn in Athens, he did not renew his acquaintance with Teresa Macri. He took lodgings in a Franciscan convent, and there wrote the *Hints from Horace*—"that Satire", observes Moore, "which, impregnated as it is with London life from beginning to end, bears the date, 'Athens, Capuchin Convent, March 12, 1811'"—and the even more unreadable, because more topical, *Curse of Minerva.*

His stay was also marked by one of those ambiguous friendships with a youth infinitely below him in rank which have already been seen to recur in his life. This time the *protégé* was "a subject of France but born in Greece", named Nicolo Girard. The patron was supposed to be learning Italian from him; this made a pretext for giving him, on their parting at Malta in 1811 (for so far homewards did the new Edleston accompany him),

a considerable sum of money; while soon after his return home, Byron made the fantastic will already alluded to, in which by no means the least fantastic feature was a legacy to Girard of seven thousand pounds.

He set sail for England on June 3, 1811, from Malta, where he had gone through another severe attack of fever. His letters on the way home—to his mother, Dallas, Hodgson, and Henry Drury—make melancholy reading. A year before he had written to Hodgson: "I hope you will find me an altered personage—I do not mean in body, but in manner, for I begin to find out that nothing but virtue will do in this damned world. I am tolerably sick of vice . . . and mean, on my return, to cut all my dissolute acquaintance, leave off wine and carnal company, and betake myself to politics and decorum. I am very serious and cynical, and a good deal disposed to moralise". He quickly wavered from one of these intentions: "I shall perhaps essay a speech or *two* in the House . . . but I am not ambitious of a parliamentary career, which is of all things the most degrading and unthankful".[1] As the time drew nearer for his return, this listlessness increased. The old, sore question of selling Newstead cropped up again, conveyed through his mother from the dilatory Hanson; and he wrote that if the Abbey must go, so would he. "If I preserve Newstead, I return; if I sell it, I stay away". Hanson himself wrote at last, and his letter contained the news that Messrs. Brothers, upholsterers of Nottingham, had put in an execution at the Abbey for £1600.[2] It was not encouraging, and to Dallas and

[1] *L. and J.* i. 284.

[2] Old Joe Murray was outraged by this occurrence. The sight of the notice of sale, pasted on the Abbey door, was more than he could endure. But he was sufficiently afraid of "the Law" to hesitate at tearing the paper down, and so at last hit upon a compromise. He pasted a large piece of brown paper over it (Moore, p. 121).

Hodgson the returning Pilgrim wrote dismally of his prospects. "Much business must be done with lawyers, colliers, farmers, and creditors. Now this, to a man who hates bustle as he hates a bishop, is a serious concern". "I am returning home without a hope, and almost without a desire. . . . In short, I am sick and sorry, and when I have a little repaired my irreparable affairs, away I shall march".

He arrived in England on July 17, 1811, after an absence of two years.

CHAPTER X

THE RETURN—1811

Reunions—Dallas discovers *Childe Harold*: Byron's misjudgment—*Hints from Horace*—John Murray the Second—Mrs. Byron's death—*The Scourge*—Death of Charles Skinner Matthews—Byron's grief—The Will of 1811

BYRON came back with an odd collection of spoils: a phial of Attic hemlock,[1] four Athenian skulls,[2] four live tortoises and a greyhound (the last died on the passage) to say nothing of two "live Greek servants, one an Athenian, t'other a *Yaniote*, who can speak nothing but Romaic and Italian". These were "for myself". There were soberer offerings for others: a shawl and a quantity of attar of roses for Mrs. Byron, and marbles for Hobhouse, who was the first of his friends to welcome him. He saw Hodgson and Drury also in these early days of return; and Hodgson, whose meeting with him had been interrupted, dispatched in the evening of the same day, from Harrow, a copy of verses:

> "Alone, my Byron, at Harrovian springs—
> Yet not alone—thy joyous Hodgson sings".

What trait could better exhibit to us the luxuriance of that versifying age, the facility with which the Alexandrine school could turn on the tap!

> "O flow along, all unrestrain'd by art,
> Thou glad effusion of that grateful heart" . . .

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[1] At present in Mr. Murray's possession.

[2] Given afterwards to Sir Walter Scott.

But the effusions would have brought about a second deluge if many young men had been so copious as "Juvenal" Hodgson, of whom it might be truly said, "Touch him ne'er so lightly, into song he broke".

Dallas, too, was eager to greet the returned pilgrim. As soon as possible after the arrival in London, that admirable personage appeared at Reddish's Hotel, St. James's Street. . . . But before enlarging on this interview, so pregnant with destiny as it was, I must turn aside to notice Galt's comments on the state of Byron's affairs. "The embarrassed condition in which he found [them], sufficiently explains the dejection and uneasiness with which he was afflicted during the latter part of his residence in Greece; and yet it was not such as ought to have affected him so deeply, nor have I ever been able to comprehend wherefore so much stress has been laid on his supposed friendlessness. In respect both to it, and to his ravelled fortune, a great deal too much has been said; and the manliness of his character has suffered by the puling". This is admirably sane. Delawarr, the ever-disappointing, was done with; but what other friend had betrayed him, had even neglected him? He returned to open arms and hearts—Hobhouse's, Hodgson's, Drury's, Dallas's: which of us can reckon more than four to whom our coming back from absence is an event? It will soon be shown too that there was another—one to whom he could confidently appeal in grief and desolation.

Dallas thought him looking better than his own account had betokened, nor was he so melancholy as the kindly creature had feared to find him. He spoke eagerly of his travels; but "no! he had never had the least idea of writing them; satire was his *forte*, and he had written a satire while away. It was a paraphrase of Horace's *Art of Poetry*, which would make a good

finish to *English Bards*". He seemed sanguine about it: would his friend see it through the press, as he had done with the earlier one? But they were interrupted. He gave Dallas the MS., and engaged him to breakfast the next morning.

That day Dallas read the paraphrase. . . . Was this the outcome of the romantic adventure—this the fruit that had ripened beneath the "cloudless skies of Greece"? "Not that the verse was bad"—or so the disconcerted reader forced himself to believe, for "the poem was his, and the affection he had acquired in my heart was undiminished". But indeed the verse *was* bad; the lines were sprawling and inanimate, the satire was thin—little was here of even *English Bards*, and even *English Bards* would have been a poor result of two years' wandering in the wild, of long sojourns in such cities as Stamboul and Athens. . . . The adoring man went to next morning's breakfast with a heavy heart. He said what he could; then ventured to inquire if *nothing* else had been written?

His host understood, and spared him as yet *The Curse of Minerva*, twin abortion of the second stay in Athens. But it was very negligently that he confessed to some short poems and "a great many stanzas in the Spenserian measure, relative to the wanderings". They were not worth Dallas's troubling with, but he should have them all if he liked—and Byron took from a small trunk a number of papers. "Only one person[1] had read them, and that person had found very little to commend and much to condemn, and he, their perpetrator, bowed to this sentence, and Dallas would be sure to do the same". Dallas listened, and after

[1] This was thought by Galt to have been Hobhouse, a very natural supposition. But Hobhouse repudiated it. "There is not the slightest foundation for the conjecture". Elze suggests the Marquis of Sligo.

a promise to put the *Hints from Horace* in train immediately, went off with the sheaf of papers under his arm. Whatever they might be like, they could hardly prove more disappointing than the paraphrase.

"So came I" (he wrote) "by *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*". And so, in a sense, came the world by it.[1]

We move in our chairs as we read the story, and feel again the old envy of that discoverer. Let us figure it to ourselves once more. The enigmatic, brilliant boy—but twenty-three!—and his fond, anxious relative; the former day's disappointment, the bundle of papers now so likely to be disappointing also; the opening of the parcel, possibly upon the lyrics, none of them arresting, and then . . .

That very evening Dallas sat down and wrote, and caught his idol before a flight to Harrow and Henry Drury's. "You have written one of the most delightful poems I have ever read. . . . I have been so fascinated with *Childe Harold* that I have not been able to lay it down. I would almost pledge my life on its advancing the reputation of your poetical powers".

But to his amazement, on breakfasting soon again with Byron, he found him quite unmoved by this appreciation. "I could not obtain credit for my judgment". The author of *Childe Harold*[2] maintained that

[1] Moore thought so, at any rate. His feeling was that if Byron had published then the *Hints from Horace*, "his former assailants would have resumed their advantage over him", and "he would have flung *Childe Harold* into the fire". "The deuce he would!" retorted Christopher North. . . . "He would instantly have written another satire . . . and it would have been a red-hot bar of iron. We cannot believe that the power of a mighty poet could have been palsied by a single stumble, however inopportune". But Moore thought too that at no other time could *Childe Harold* have produced "that explosion of success . . . into which, coming, as it were, fresh from the land of song, he now surprised the world"; and this, since Destiny has her destined moments, we may well believe.

[2] In a note (p. 122) Moore records the denial given by Hobhouse to the story of Byron's hesitation to publish *Childe Harold*. "[It] is at

it was "anything but poetry—it had been condemned by a good critic—had not Dallas seen the sentences on the margins of the MS.?" And then he fondly recurred to the dismal paraphrase. That was to be given to Cawthorn, that was to be brought forth without delay. But Dallas was tenacious—and, after all, the great MS. was his. He reminded Byron. "You gave it to me, and I am so convinced of its merit that I shall certainly publish it". This seemed to impress him at last. But he "varied much in his feelings about it"; said that it was going to get him into a scrape with his old enemies—finally said that his name must not be put to it. Dallas merely "entreated him to leave it to me; I would answer for this poem silencing all his enemies". But still, though he acquiesced, he doubted.

What are we to think of this? It is not alone in literary history; authors have frequently preferred their failures to their triumphs; but such an extraordinary misjudgment as Byron's remains inexplicable. For in nearly every other case, there has been some personal reason to explain the unreason. The loved inferior has in some way touched the writer's heart, has been, autobiographically or locally, "his" book. But here was only paraphrase—and poor paraphrase. And there, half-torn from Dallas's bravely unfastened hand, was an

complete variance with all he repeatedly mentioned to me on the subject". Moore makes no comment. Dallas's explicit testimony must stand against this mere assertion—for though we know that Byron delighted to mystify him, there would have been nothing to be gained by the game in this instance. The best way out of the difficulty is to recognise (and it is patent) that Dallas and Hobhouse were mutually most jealous of Byron's confidence. Each betrays it frequently; Dallas, of course, with the greater naïveté, and with the greater hold upon our sympathy because he was, in the end, wholly cast aside by his idol. He was inevitably the one to lose, if either was to lose; but at *this* moment he had his definite niche in Byron's scheme of things, and it is to him that, on the point of the hesitation to print, our credence should be given.

"accident of genius", an original and dazzling creation, a thing by itself!

The quest of Byron's life was originality, as the passion of it was fame. Originality was here: "of design", says Mr. Coleridge, but, for the age, there was surely another—of expression. The same things had been thought before ("they were coeval with reflection"),[1] but they had not been said like that. It was the message of the Romantic Movement, in short, delivered by the most romantic creature that has ever lived. Let us accept for the moment an ancient fallacy, and say that a boy dreams glorious dreams—a girl, sentimental ones. Byron dreamed both, and dreamed them to extremity. . . . Well! he had caught his long-chased nymph, Originality, and he did not recognise her. Or was it rather that she had caught him? Not in poesy had he set himself to grasp her; it was in the mere external round that he had vainly listened for her slackening footfall. And the rogue had stolen up behind him in his study, where he sat and copied Pope, and betrayed her with her enemy Convention; and, turning round to find her there unbidden, a perversity of faith had seized him, and Convention was hugged to his heart, and Originality was handed over to Dallas! In Dallas she found her knight. Not only by him was she enthroned, but by him the enemy Convention was imprisoned. . . . Dallas delayed the paraphrase by artful, difficult devices, until the poem was acclaimed; and by doing so, delayed it to the end. *Hints from Horace* did not see the light until seven years after the death at Missolonghi.[2] We must remember, in partial

[1] *Poems*, ii. xiii.

[2] Dallas published selections from the paraphrase in his *Recollections* in 1824. He probably transcribed them from his fragmentary proof-sheets, and "it may be inferred" (says Mr. Coleridge) "that the press was stopped at line 272". The full text was first published in 1831.

explanation of Byron, that adverse criticism was (until he found himself to the full in *Juan*) always with him more powerful than praise. "Years after, in the plenitude of his fame, he confessed that 'the depreciation of the lowest of mankind was more painful to him than the applause of the highest was pleasing'".[1]

When the publication of *Childe Harold* was at last decided on, Cawthorn was the first publisher thought of by Dallas. He had done well with the early Satire; it seemed only fair that he should have the greater work. But Byron now declared that Cawthorn was obscure. "I found", says Dallas with naïve jealousy (he was a very jealous man), "that this had been instilled into Lord Byron's ear since his return . . . probably at Harrow". All the more reason, in the elder's view, for using him; it would be good for Byron to make "as Pope did" (and Dallas must surely have used the potent plea!) "*his* bookseller the most fashionable one; and this he could easily have done. He thought more modestly of himself"—and the poem was offered to Miller, of Albemarle Street. But Miller was Lord Elgin's publisher, and Lord Elgin was bitterly attacked (it was the period of the Marbles controversy) in *Childe Harold*. Miller declined it. This reawakened all Byron's fears; there is a letter to the publisher of July 30, 1811, in which he is "perfectly aware of the justice of your remarks". Here was another vacillation for Dallas to combat. He again prevailed, and promising that Longmans (who had refused *English Bards*) should not be approached, he once more went forth, this time with *carte blanche*. He could follow his heart now, and to his own man he repaired.

[1] Moore quotes this as "one of the MS. notes in the last edition of Mr. d'Israeli's work on *The Literary Character*, which that gentleman found in a copy of the work that belonged to [Lord Byron]".

JOHN MURRAY, 1778-1843

FROM THE PAINTING BY H. W. PICKERSGILL, R.A., IN THE POSSESSION OF MR. JOHN MURRAY

This was John Murray the Second—that "coming" publisher who in the February of 1809 had launched the *Quarterly Review* with Gifford as editor, who counted Gifford among his "readers" too, and who had already expressed to Dallas a wish to number the author of *English Bards* among *his* authors. John Murray's shop at 32 Fleet Street, opposite St. Dunstan's Church,[1] was, then, the Mecca of *Childe Harold's* next pilgrimage. "Lord Byron has put it into my hands", said Dallas, offering the manuscript. "I expect that you will make a very liberal agreement with me". Murray took some days to consider it; but before Dallas visited him at all, events had so crowded into the life of its author that I must for the moment leave the publisher with his literary advisers, and follow Byron to Newstead, whither he had gone on August 2.

On July 23 he had written to his mother from London to say that law-business was detaining him: "It is with great reluctance I remain in town". As soon as he could, he would go down, and she was to consider Newstead as her house, and him only as a visitor.

On the first day of August she died. In the beginning her indisposition had seemed a trifling one, and he had not been summoned; but excessive corpulency rendered her a dangerous subject for illness, and just as this one took a critical turn, the upholsterers' bills

[1] In September 1812, John Murray moved to 50 Albemarle Street, and soon made that as historical a spot as his old quarters had been for long before his time. *Romeo and Juliet* (1609) and *Hamlet* (1611) were published by Southwick, who had his shop "under the Diall"; and in 1653, *The Compleat Angler* first saw the light in the same bookselling centre, published by Richard Marriot. John Murray I had also published, from No. 32, very many famous books: Langhorne's *Plutarch*, Mitford's *Greece*, Isaac d'Israeli's first *Curiosities*, and Lavater's famous *Physiognomy* (Henley, p. 376).

came in, and so infuriated her by their amount that she was seized by one of her unhappy rages, and never recovered from its devastating effects. . . . Always superstitious, she had had a haunting fancy, when he left England in 1809, that she should never see him again; the farewell letter with its repellent courtesy had doubtless heightened this imagining, and the more so because their last parting had been the scene of one of her most terrible outbursts. He had returned, safe and well; yet when he wrote to tell her so and promise that he would soon be with her, she had said to her maid, "If I should be dead before Byron comes down, what a strange thing it would be!"

He came down, and she was dead.[1] On the night after his arrival, the maid was passing the room where her former mistress lay, when she heard a heavy sigh from within. She entered; the room was in darkness, but she could distinguish the young lord's figure by the bed. She tried to utter some words of comfort: "he must not so give way to grief". But his tears came irresistibly; she stood beside, embarrassed and distressed, till at last she heard him articulate amid the sobs, "I had but one friend in the world and she is gone". . . . Such a sudden experience had been this woman's; and it must have been with amazement that, on the day of the funeral, she not only saw him refuse to follow the procession to the churchyard and stand watching it from the Abbey door till it was out of sight, but then turn to one of the inferior men-servants, and desire him to fetch the sparring-gloves, that they might have their usual morning exercise. He was silent and abstracted all the time; the man thought his blows were more violent than

[1] He had heard of her serious condition on July 31, and had at once started for Newstead, but the news of her death reached him on the road.

usual—then, suddenly flinging the gloves away, he left the hall and was unseen for many hours. "Not Shakespere", said the *Quarterly* in 1831, reviewing Moore, "could have conceived such a scene".

We may not too closely analyse his emotion. When he wrote, on his way to the Abbey after hearing the news, to his old friend John Pigot of Southwell—who alone among his present acquaintance had known Mrs. Byron—and quoted Gray's "We can only have one mother", a deeper than the obvious meaning may well have pierced his consciousness. The one mother *he* had had—what mingled wretchedness and anger she had stirred in him! And all had been reciprocal; what she had called forth from him, he had called forth from her. . . . Such sorrow is the more poignant for its ambiguity. Which, in truth, was he mourning—her death, or her life?

To attribute to her conduct with him his own caprice and violence is to ignore the daily fruits of observation. Courses like hers have more frequently the opposite consequence. They teach their victim meekness—or if not meekness, evasion—or if not evasion, an iron stoicism. Bitter words may now and then be uttered, but for the most part it is by the parade of dumb endurance that revenge is taken. Byron, being who he was (and in what has been urged above, no more than the question of personal influence has been considered), must have been all that he was—wayward, violent, resentful, sad. His mother might assuredly have made his life with her less hateful, but she could not have instilled into his soul one impulse that was not, in germ or in flower, already there.

Doubtless, among the cloud of feelings stirred by her death, a chivalrous anger loomed large. One of his

first acts on returning to England had been to buy a copy of a paper named *The Scourge*. In the March number there had appeared an article headed "Lord Byron". It attacked him savagely, in revenge for *his* attack in *English Bards* on one Hewson Clarke, a journalist, whom he had characterised as

> "A would-be satirist, a hired buffoon,
> A monthly scribbler of some low Lampoon".

Clarke, who was a sizar at Emanuel College, Cambridge, in Byron's time, had been "abusing" him in the *Satirist* for some years, and the lines in *English Bards* had been Byron's answer. Now all was summed up, as it were, in *The Scourge* article. To term it libellous is a mild form of speech. He was called "the illegitimate descendant of a murderer", "a vulgar debauchee", "the son of a profligate father and a mother whose days and nights are spent in the delirium of drunkenness"; he was said to be "hated for malignity of temper and repulsiveness of manners, and shunned by every man who does not want to be considered a profligate without wit, and a trifler without elegance". . . . He put the case in the hands of Sir Vicary Gibbs, Attorney-General, who gave his opinion against legal proceedings, because a considerable time had elapsed since the publication, and because Byron himself had provoked the attack. The decision must have sorely chafed him. He had written confidently to Pigot and Hanson of the case. To Hanson: "I will have no stain on the memory of my mother; with a very large portion of foibles and irritability, she was without a *vice* (and in these days that is much). . . . Cost what it may, Gold or blood, I will pursue to the last the cowardly calumniator of an absent man and a defenceless woman". He wrote this on August 4,

amid the preparations for her funeral. But neither blood nor gold was shed.

On August 7, comes his next letter—to Scrope Berdmore Davies. "My dearest Davies,—Some curse hangs over me and mine. My mother lies a corpse in this house; one of my best friends is drowned in a ditch". . . . The friend was the starry youth of Cambridge—his adored Charles Skinner Matthews. On the very day before Matthews' end, he had written to Byron, and the letter, forwarded from London, reached Newstead on August 5, when he had been three days dead. For it was on August 2 that there took place at Cambridge the terrible scene detailed by Henry Drury in a letter to Hodgson.[1] Matthews had gone to bathe alone in the Cam, "at the fork above the mills", and had got entangled in the weeds. "Not fifty of the strongest-bodied men in England", wrote Drury, who had since visited the spot, "could, without ropes, have given the slightest assistance. . . . There is *literally* a bed of weeds, thick, more than *eight feet deep*". A man named Hart, who was unknown to Matthews, had witnessed in agonised impotence the unspeakable last moments. He had thought to hear a cry for help, and came to the spot. "Nothing was to be seen. . . . Conceive his horror when on a sudden there darted up in the middle of the river a human form half-length out of the water. He made an excessive struggle. His arms were locked in weeds; so were his legs and thighs. You never saw such a place". Hart shouted, "For God's sake, make no more exertions; try to keep still till a rope is procured". "In a resistless struggle, Matthews then disentangled the weeds from his arms . . . and

[1] *Memoir of Rev. F. Hodgson*, i. 182–85. A similar account was given by Scrope Davies in a letter to Hobhouse, who sent it to Byron, saying, "I would that he had not been so minute in his horrid details".

threw them from him. This effort was his last; as if exhausted in it, he fell back. He was under the water in an instant, and no trace was left of him".[1]

Davies hurried down to Newstead in answer to Byron's cry: "Come to me, Scrope, I am almost desolate, left almost alone in the world". . . . Indeed we may forgive him his extravagance of sorrow now. What a return! No sooner alighted in England than he hears of Wingfield's death—no sooner rallied from that than his mother chokes herself out of existence before he can see her—no sooner *that* accepted than his imagination, through the pitiless details of Drury's and Davies's letters, is gripped and strangled as by the very weeds that dragged the worshipped Matthews down to death. "What can I say, or think, or do?" he cries—that oldest cry, and most unanswerable in its moment of most poignant utterance . . . while as if to add the last drop to the cup, here, in grim grotesquerie, is Dallas writing him almost daily homilies on the immortality of the soul, and enclosing amid the countless sheets, a "Formal Protest" against the sceptical passages in *Childe Harold*! "Let me hear from you on anything but death; I am already too familiar with the dead", he cries—and in his wild and restless misery draws up that fantastic Will of 1811, wherein he desired to be buried beside his dog, "without any ceremony or burial-service whatever, or any inscription, save my name and age".

[1] "Every one who was on the spot highly commends all Hart did. I verily think he nearly killed himself in his endeavours". For Hart "succeeded in having him got out in twelve minutes; but all too late" (*Memoir of Rev. F. Hodgson*, i. 185).

CHAPTER XI

NEW LIFE—1811–1812

Thomas Moore—Samuel Rogers—The dinner at Rogers's—Byron's impressions—London life—Religious questions—Murray accepts *Childe Harold*—Gifford's praise, and Byron's anger—"I awoke one morning" . . .—First speech in the Lords—Lord Holland—The "Byron Fever"

WHILE *Childe Harold* was still unpublished, and Byron still lingered in the country or at Cambridge, there reached him a letter destined to be fruitful in consequences and friendship. To display the incident adequately, I must go back so far as 1806. In that year, Thomas Moore, writing as Thomas Little, had published a volume of poetry which was attacked by the *Edinburgh Review*. So savage was the mauling that Moore sent Jeffrey a challenge. They met at Chalk Farm, and according to Henley, "took a fancy to each other on the ground. But the affair had taken wind, and they were arrested. . . . When the pistols were examined at Bow Street, it was found that one had a bullet in it, but the other had not". Moore's was "the other". The newspapers of course got hold of the story, with the result that may be imagined. Moore published a letter stating (which was true) that Jeffrey's second had sworn to seeing both pistols loaded; but it was no use—for several months he was a target of the wits.[1] Nor did the memory quickly

[1] Medwin gives this version: ". . . The ball is said to have fallen out of one of the pistols and to have been lost; the seconds, having no other

die, for in 1809, three years after the event, the cruellest of all these wits emerged in the anonymous author of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, who, in an ironic allusion to Jeffrey, recalled

> "That ever glorious, almost fatal fray,
> When Little's leadless pistol met his eye,
> And Bow-Street myrmidons stood laughing by",

—and added a note which enshrined the original story, since contradicted by "Little".

As soon as Moore saw the second and acknowledged addition of the Satire (which he did not do for some months), he sent Byron a challenge. It is dated January 1, 1810—a date on which we know, though he did not, that Byron was out of England. The letter was placed, by the friend to whom Moore entrusted it, in Hodgson's hands; and Hodgson, suspicious of its purport, resolved to keep it back. By the time Byron returned (he thought), Moore's anger would have cooled.

By the time Byron returned, Moore had at any rate married and become a father, two occurrences which modified his views about duelling. But the note to the "leadless pistol" lines still rankled, and he determined to have it out with the offender. Mrs. Byron's death delayed his purpose, but as soon as might be afterwards—at the end of October 1811—he wrote another letter. He referred to the former one: had it ever reached Lord Byron? In case it had not, he recapitulated it, but frankly avowed his changed intentions. The "injured feeling" still existed—there was no vindictive sentiment, but "that uneasiness under . . . a charge of falsehood which must haunt a man of any

ammunition at hand, there was nothing to be done but to draw the ball from the other pistol. The principals, who knew nothing of this, *fired without bullets*". They never "fired" at all.

feeling to his grave, unless the insult be retracted or atoned for". He added that if "by any satisfactory explanation", Byron could "enable him to seek the honour of being included among his acquaintances, it would give him sincere pleasure".

Byron's answer was that he had never received the first letter, nor ever seen Moore's public refutation of the gossip. He asked what Moore wished to have done: "I can neither retract nor apologise for a charge of falsehood which I never advanced". He was ready to do anything, conciliatory or otherwise—and was Moore's obedient, humble servant. Moore was not satisfied. The letter contained all that "the strict *diplomatique* of explanation could require"; but he felt that there was some ambiguity in Byron's allusions to the challenge. He replied with a good deal of hurt feeling, saying that the answer was "as satisfactory as he could expect".

Byron had not even yet received from Hodgson the original challenge; and in his reply to Moore's second letter, he said so. But there had been another sore point for Moore in Byron's first answer. This was his having left entirely unnoticed the overture towards acquaintance, and Moore had alluded to the omission with *hauteur*. Byron now said that he had felt himself unable to take the first step towards friendship. Was not Moore the offended person? If Moore was ready, *he* was ready; but with Moore it rested. The Irishman was still dissatisfied. With the sensibility of his race, he detected a rebuff in one saying of Byron's: "until the *principal point* was settled between us"; and he therefore answered frigidly that "his lordship had made him feel the imprudence he was guilty of in wandering from the point immediately in discussion between them"—adding that "their corre-

spondence might, from this moment, cease for ever". He was "satisfied with Byron's explanation".

In a question of graciousness, the Irish instinct may be trusted. Where it finds something lacking, something *is* lacking. Moore had been true to its prompting, and the next day confirmed him in his faith. Byron wrote on October 30, 1811, that "frank and open-hearted" letter which so auspiciously began the closest friendship of his life. Moore (he said) having at last unequivocally declared himself satisfied, the technical quarrel was over;[1] etiquette was thrown to the winds: he would be most happy to make acquaintance, "when, where, and how" Moore pleased. In Moore's comment he attributes any blame there may have been to himself and to the "somewhat national confusion" he had made of the "boundaries . . . of hostility and friendship". All the credit for the happy issue is awarded to Byron —a trait as national as the earlier "confusion".[2]

The immediate result was two new friendships, for Moore at once confided the affair to Samuel Rogers, who was an intimate of his, and Rogers proposed that the meeting should take place at his table. This suggestion was conveyed to Byron, and he (now in London) cordially accepted it. . . . So did he come for the first time into relation with the really notable men of his day, breaking (as he had broken from the Southwell bonds) out of the coterie of mere scribblers like Hodgson, Hobhouse,

[1] The original challenge was returned unopened to Moore, at his own suggestion.

[2] Moore tells an amusing anecdote of the dawning days of friendship. He and Byron went on December 14, 1811, to visit Campbell at Sydenham. They drove down in Byron's carriage, and started at midday. As the servant was shutting the door of the *vis-à-vis*, Byron asked him, "Have you put in the pistols?"—and the man replied that he had. "It was difficult", says Moore—"more especially taking into account the circumstances under which we had just become acquainted—to keep from smiling at this singular noonday precaution" (p. 148).

Dallas, into the van of contemporary intellect—his natural place, and soon to be dominated by this boldest spirit of them all.

Samuel Rogers's house in St. James's Place, overlooking the Green Park, was just then the rival of Holland House as the great social meeting-place for the intellectuals in every sort. "He was that most perfect of all hospitable things, a perfect bachelor host"; [1] and he made himself that kind of host for almost every one of value whom he met. He knew everybody, was "permanently, as far as any one ever was, in Lady Holland's good books", and was as famous for his generosity as for his caustic wit, which seemed, as Fanny Kemble said, "to cut his lips as he uttered it". A small, slender creature, his facial appearance was so lugubrious that one of his friends asked him (in the gracefully personal taste of the age) why he did not set up his hearse, while another, coming out with him at Rome from a visit to the Catacombs, shook hands at the entrance with "Goodbye, Rogers".

"Anacreon" Moore, the sweet singer in a double sense of London, had been intimate with him since 1805. "Though in his society one walks upon roses", wrote Moore to Lady Donegal, "it is with constant apprehension of the thorns that are among them". They had their points of acute difference. Naïve, almost attractively naïve, as Moore's snobbery was (the artless glee and pride in "dukes for dukes' sakes"!), there lay beneath it, as there lies beneath all snobbery, a moral flaw. He had begun his literary career with a different ambition—to be "the poet of the people of Ireland". Long before thirty-two (his age in 1811) that ambition was, not forgotten, but overgrown. He had become the "Princes' Poet", the darling of the high-set

[1] R. Ellis Roberts, *Samuel Rogers and his Circle*. Methuen, 1910.

drawing-rooms, wherein the cause of Ireland was not a passport to favouritism. Now and again the national note was sounded, but Irony would then seem to bend a disconcerting ear to the singing, and the note would decline to sentimentality. If Irony would have let him alone, he would have sung of The Dark Rosaleen in the London salons, to the half-puzzled and half-patronising and more than half-indignant British ears; but Irony pursued him in that furtive but relentless way she has, and, susceptible as the artist must ever be, Moore suffered under the haunting, and to escape it, sang of other things—until the spirit of patriotism hovered over him again, and spurred him to another effort. Perhaps the ghost would have gone? But the ghost never went. Irony condemned each cry for Erin: whatever it might sound like now (she whispered to him), it would sound like tinkling cymbals to posterity.

Rogers, immune from any form of snobbery, watched and felt it all. When the gay little man laid down as an axiom that "in high life one meets the best society", the caustic little man answered him with a gibe. For Rogers "never lost his sense of proportion", and his sense of values was consummate. You took delightful things where you found them, and you found them often in high life. But the "pale head, white, bare, and cold as snow", and the "large blue eyes, cruel, scornful",[1] must surely have brooded fastidiously upon the further question (which could not occur to Moore): "What *is* 'high life'?"

Early in November 1811, the famous dinner took place. Rogers had never seen Byron before; neither had Moore, nor Thomas Campbell (already past his zenith, though but thirty-four), who was the only other guest. Rogers arranged with them that he should be

[1] Carlyle's impression of Rogers, whom he met in 1838.

THOMAS MOORE

FROM THE PAINTING BY SIR THOMAS LAWRENCE, P.R.A., IN THE POSSESSION OF MR. JOHN MURRAY

alone in the drawing-room when the stranger entered: a trait of delicate consideration for his lameness. Shortly afterwards, the other two returned, and Moore saw Byron for the first time. He was in mourning for his mother, and the "pure, spiritual paleness of his features", enhanced by the dark dress and the "curling, picturesque hair", made the usual indelible impression. The beautiful voice added its spell to the rest; and so, among the three small men, one with his keen spectral face, the other two with their round and lively countenances, Byron, Adonis of the Ages, sat down to dinner.

Rogers asked him if he would take soup.

"No; I never take soup".

"Some fish?" as the soup vanished.

"No; I never take fish".

Presently the mutton arrived. The same question; the same answer.

Our perfect host bore up. "A glass of wine?"

"No; I never taste wine".

"It was now necessary", says Rogers in his account of this far from perfect guest, "to ask what he *did* eat and drink; and the answer was, 'Nothing but hard biscuits and soda-water'. Unfortunately, neither hard biscuits nor soda-water were at hand; and he dined then upon potatoes bruised down upon his plate and drenched with vinegar. . . . Some days after, meeting Hobhouse, I said to him, 'How long will Lord Byron persevere in his present diet?' He replied, 'Just as long as you continue to notice it'". Rogers adds that he came to learn, "as a fact", that Byron, after leaving his house very late, went to a club in St. James's Street and ate a hearty meat supper. That may be true, but it seems unlikely. He was sincere in his austerities, for (as we have seen) the best of reasons.

Thenceforth, despite this beginning, Byron saw a

great deal of Rogers, and the latter recorded his impressions in his *Table-Talk*. Byron was not yet emancipated from the family shyness, if indeed he ever was. "He had no readiness of reply in conversation", says Rogers. "If you happened to let fall any observation which offended him, he would say nothing at the time; but the offence would lie rankling in his mind, and perhaps a fortnight later, he would suddenly come out with some very cutting remarks upon you, giving them as his deliberate opinions, the result of his experience of your character". But, as Mr. Ellis Roberts points out, we must remember that Rogers's recollections of Byron in London were written many years afterwards, and that in the meantime they had met somewhat discomfortably in 1821, during the Italian exile. Rogers's venom came out in his later account of this companionship. "[Byron and I] travelled some time together; and if there was any scenery particularly well worth seeing, he generally contrived that we should pass through it in the dark". Byron's early impressions were recorded in the Journal of 1813. "Rogers is silent, and, it is said, severe. When he does talk, he talks well; and, on all subjects of taste, his delicacy of expression is as pure as his poetry. . . . There is not a gem, a coin, a book thrown aside . . . that does not bespeak an almost fastidious elegance in the possessor. But this very delicacy must be the misery of his existence. Oh, the jarrings his disposition must have encountered through life!" The Ravenna Journal of 1821 (*Detached Thoughts*) strikes a different note. "Rogers is the reverse of the line:

"'The *best* good man with the *worst* natured Muse'

being

"'The *worst* good man with the *best* natured Muse'.

His Muse being all Sentiment and Sago and Sugar, while he himself is a venomous talker. I say '*worst*

good man' because he is (perhaps) a good man; at least he does good now and then, as well he may, to purchase himself a shilling's worth of Salvation for his slanders. They are so *little*, too—small talk—and old Womaney, and he is malignant too—and envious—and—he be damned!"[1]

For Moore, Byron at once conceived the liking that lasted all his life. "The epitome of all that is exquisite in poetical or personal accomplishments", he wrote to Harness of the Irish poet; and the diary of 1813 contained a similar tribute. "More pleasing than any individual with whom I am acquainted. He has but one fault—and that one I daily regret—he is not *here*". Campbell too impressed him pleasantly, though by no means to the same degree. He thought him a "warm-hearted and honest man", and highly admired his work; but already at the time they met, Campbell's great reputation ("too easily acquired", said George Ticknor) was waning, and his exertions to retrieve it were, in Walter Scott's opinion, "ruining his individuality".

So passed the time before the publication of *Childe Harold*. There were dark hours now and then, but on the whole life was more favourably regarded. Byron joined the Alfred Club, in Albemarle Street—the Savile of its age; but he was not enthusiastic. "It was a decent resource, on a rainy day, or a dearth of parties, or parliament, or in an empty season". For the rest, there was a vigorously renewed correspondence with William Harness, who was soon with Hodgson to pay him a visit at Newstead; there were lyrical outbursts—the group of *Thyrza* poems; there seems to have been no woman; there were theatres—Kemble in *Coriolanus*, and Romeo Coates (the "Amateur of Fashion", laughing-stock of the public) "who performed in a *damned* and

[1] And see Chapter XXIV.

damnable manner"; there was a good deal of intercourse with Galt, who met him one night at the Opera, and talked with him in Italian—a friend who was with Galt closely observing them the while. "Who was he?" asked this gentleman; "a foreigner, evidently?" Galt disabused him; he then said that "he had never seen a man with such a Cain-like mark on his forehead".

And there was of course continual traffic with Dallas, in connection not only with *Childe Harold*, but with a question eternally opened up by the persistent elder—the religious one. Already in 1811, this had loomed too large: there had been the interminable letters upon the immortality of the soul which had caused Byron's outcry: "Let me hear from you on anything but death"; there had been the "Formal Protest" against the scepticism of *Childe Harold*. No less lengthy screeds pursued him still, and not only Dallas kept him in harassment. Hodgson had joined in, and he lived through troublous days between them. "I *deny nothing*, but doubt everything", he cried at last in desperation to the latter. . . . I do not propose, in any part of this book, to discuss Byron's religious opinions. Whatever they were, we have only to concern ourselves with them as he expressed them in his work and in his life. In his work, such expression is assuredly lucid enough and often enough afforded; in his life, the implication is what it is in most lives—of an ideal alternately found and lost. Manners have changed, in that respect, more perhaps than in any. We are not prepared, as were the men of Byron's day, to assign either "atheism" or "Christianity" to others. The former word is obsolete; the latter . . . in process of definition.

Byron, after a short stay at the Abbey, returned to London in the middle of January 1812, and took up

his old quarters in St. James's Street. He had no fewer than four works in the press: *Childe Harold* with Murray; *Hints from Horace*, *The Curse of Minerva*, and the fifth edition of *English Bards* with Cawthorn. Murray, during the early days of the first stay at Newstead, had decided to publish *Childe Harold* at his own expense in a handsome quarto edition. Byron grumbled at the *format*: "a cursed unsaleable size; but it is pestilent long, and one must obey one's bookseller". Dallas was to share the profits with Murray, and the agreement for the copyright was to depend on the success. (The copyright, it will be remembered, was Dallas's property.) After much discussion, Byron had consented to let his name appear. Gifford had been shown the MS.—to his adorer's violent indignation. He had pronounced it not only the best thing Byron had written, but "equal to any of the present age"; yet even this glory had not mollified the angry author. "I *will* be angry with Murray", he had written. "It was a bookselling, back-shop, Paternoster-Row, paltry proceeding". . . . "It is bad enough to be a scribbler, without having recourse to such shifts to extort praise, or deprecate censure. It is anticipating, it is begging, kneeling, adulating—the devil! the devil! the devil! and all without my wish, and contrary to my express desire". . . . "I have written to [Murray] as he never was written to before by an author, I'll be sworn".[1] Byron's fear was that Gifford should think it (from so publicly-professed an admirer) "a hint to get a favourable review of the poem in the *Quarterly*". His anger seems nowadays out of all proportion to the

[1] Byron had expressly forbidden Murray to send the MS. to Gifford. "If it must needs be shown, send it to another. . . . He is the last man whose censure (however eager to avoid it) I would deprecate by clandestine means".

offence; but evidently the "reader" was not then a recognised functionary, while at no time, we may grant, ought his identity to be disclosed. Formality in such matters is the modern system; informality, issuing of course in tittle-tattle, was then the vogue. Murray's parlour was a kind of club: authors and authors' agents —then also unrecognised, though existent; Dallas, for example—mingled freely with the Rhadamanthine beings who should consign them to heaven or to hell.

Murray's much-resented indiscretion had at all events the good effect of bringing Byron to see that Dallas was wise in delaying the *Hints from Horace*. By this time it was generally known that he had a poem in the press, and Galt fancied that the many paragraphs which began to appear were "inspired" by him. On alluding to one of them, his suspicions were "increased by Byron's embarrassment". "I mention this incident", continues Galt, "not in the spirit of detraction . . . but as a tint of character, indicative of the appetite of distinction by which, about this period, he became so powerfully incited that at last it grew into a diseased crave". But he adds that at this time only the earliest symptoms were apparent: "the fears, the timidity, the bashfulness of young desire still clung to him, and he was throbbing with doubt if he should be found worthy of the high prize for which he was about to offer himself a candidate".

He was found worthy. There never has been such a triumph, nor did anybody ever invent an apter phrase to define one. "*I awoke one morning and found myself famous*". The morning was the 10th of March 1812.[1]

[1] Moore (p. 157) implies that the date was February 29; and Dallas (*Recollections*, p. 220) says that he obtained a copy on Tuesday, March 3. But in the *Times* and the *Morning Chronicle* for March 5, "future publication" is announced; and advertisements in the *Courier* and the *Morning Chronicle* on Tuesday, March 10, announce "first appearance" (*Poems*, ii. xii.).

In three days an edition of five hundred copies was sold; and Murray then bought the copyright for £600.[1]

The book was, in our modern jargon, "well-handled". It did not need that benefit, but Murray—and Byron—conferred it. The right people read the proofs and early copies, and talked about them in the right way; and Byron himself provided a brilliant advertisement. On February 27 he had delivered his maiden speech in the House of Lords, and it had been a success. Coming out, elated with many compliments, he encountered Dallas, who, in the emotion of the moment, held out his left hand, for his right clasped an umbrella. . . . "What, give your friend your left hand on such an occasion!" The umbrella was displayed and suppressed; Byron was content, and gleefully assured the proprietor of *Childe Harold* that the débût had been the best possible advertisement for the "poesy".

His speech, not too well delivered—but better delivered than either of the succeeding ones—reads admirably. The debate was on the Nottingham Frame-breaking Bill. There was trouble in Nottingham: trade was bad, the stocking-weavers had been losing work, and their discontent was increased by the introduction of machinery for the manufacture of gaiters and stockings. Employment, they supposed, would now decrease still further, and in the November of 1811 there had been serious rioting—houses broken into, stocking-frames destroyed. The military had been called out in force:

[1] The whole sum fell to Dallas, who gives this account of the transaction with Byron. "After speaking of the sale, and settling the new edition, I said, 'How can I possibly think of this rapid sale, and the profits likely to ensue, without recollecting——' 'What?' 'Think what a sum your work may produce'. 'I shall be rejoiced, and wish it doubled and trebled; but do not talk to me of money. I never will receive money for my writings'" (*Recollections*, p. 230).

by January 1812, the town was swarming with soldiers. A Bill was introduced in the Commons on February 14, increasing the severity of punishment for frame-breaking. It passed its third reading on February 20, without a division. Lord Liverpool then introduced it into the House of Lords,[1] and it was on the second reading (February 27, 1812) that Byron spoke. He was so strongly in favour of the weavers that he had already written to Lord Holland: "I am a little apprehensive that your Lordship will think me . . . half a frame-breaker myself". He said of his performance, "I spoke very violent sentences with a sort of modest impudence, abused everything and everybody, and put the Lord Chancellor very much out of humour".

There is a strong note of modernity in some of the "violent sentences". "The police, however useless, were by no means idle: several notorious delinquents had been detected—men, liable to conviction, on the clearest evidence, of the capital crime of poverty, men who had been nefariously guilty of lawfully begetting several children"—that "lawfully" is good! And in his denunciation of the course adopted in calling out the military, we seem to hear an echo before the time of comments now familiar to our ears. "I cannot see the policy of placing [the military] in situations where they can only be made ridiculous. As the sword is the worst argument that can be used, so it should be the last. In this instance it has been the first". He went on to compare, to England's disadvantage, the state of England with the state of "the most oppressed provinces in Turkey". "And what are your remedies? After months of inaction, and months of action worse than inactivity, at length comes forth the grand specific. . . .

[1] As introduced into the Lords, it rendered the offence of frame-breaking punishable *by death*!

These convulsions must terminate in death. . . . Are there not capital punishments enough in your statutes? . . . Will the famished wretch who has braved your bayonets be appalled by your gibbets? When death is a relief, and the only relief it appears that you will afford him, will he be dragooned into tranquillity?" He begged them to consider longer, not to rush this measure through the Lords as it had been rushed through the Commons. "When a proposal is made to emancipate or relieve, you hesitate, you deliberate for years, you temporise and tamper with the minds of men; but a death-bill must be passed off-hand". In peroration he drew a picture of an arrest—of one of the weavers "dragged into Court to be tried for this new offence, under this new law"; and cried, "There are two things wanting to condemn him, and these are, in my opinion, twelve butchers for a jury, and a Jeffreys for a judge!"[1]

It is not difficult to believe that a Tory Lord Chancellor may have been "very much out of humour"; nevertheless, our orator was warmly complimented by "divers persons *ministerial*—yea, *ministerial!*" while, on his own Whig side, Lords Holland and Grenville were enthusiastic. The former said "he would beat them all if he persevered", and the latter, that he was "very like *Burke*!"

"My delivery", he told Hodgson, "[was] loud and fluent enough, perhaps a little theatrical". He suffered from the "Harrow sing-song"—"the same chanting tone", says Moore, "that disfigured his recitation of poetry . . . encroaching just enough on the boundaries of song to offend those ears most by which song is best enjoyed and understood". This defect was so marked

[1] The Bill passed its third reading on March 5, and became law as 52 George III. c. 16.

in his second and third essays[1] as to make them more or less actual failures; yet it is to be recorded that Sheridan urged him ("never ceased harping to me", says Byron in the *Detached Thoughts*) to take up the career of an orator. "But it never was my turn of inclination to try", he confesses. Elze attributes this to mental indolence, saying that to become an orator he must have worked hard, while in poetry he could gratify his love of fame with "the least expenditure of toil". The reproach condemns itself by the very measure of truth which it possesses. Men inevitably, and fortunately, turn to the thing in which they are so gifted that it comes easily; otherwise, we should behold a world of comic opera, wherein everybody pursued the aim which foredoomed him to failure. . . . But indeed the simple explanation of Byron's choice is given by himself in the *Detached Thoughts*. "Just after [my first speech], my poem of *Childe Harold* was published, and nobody ever thought about my prose afterwards, nor indeed did I".

When Moore and Byron first met, the latter was still in that singular state of isolation which had long been familiar to him. The coffee-house companions whom he had picked up before his two-yeared absence from England, were "either relinquished or dispersed"; he had but the three or four college-chums, the fussy Dallas, and the precarious Hanson (liable at any moment

[1] His second speech (April 21, 1812) was in support of Lord Donoughmore's motion for a Committee on the Roman Catholic claims; his third, in the Debate on Major Cartwright's Petition (June 1, 1813) with respect to circumstances at Huddersfield in January, 1813, in which Major Cartwright was involved. Moore relates that on Byron's return from the House he walked up and down the room, spouting his sentences in a mock-heroic voice. "I told them that it was a flagrant violation of the Constitution", etc. "But what was this dreadful grievance?" asked Moore. "The grievance?" repeated Byron, pausing as if to consider. "Oh, *that* I forget".

to annoy him, as men of law must do, by delay or conscientiousness) whom he could call his friends. It is not a tragic picture, as Galt very sanely says; but it *is* an arresting one. Lordlings are not often solitaries by compulsion; and Byron, moody and difficult though he was, was never the true solitary by election. He liked, more than most, somebody to whom he might not only say, "How sweet is solitude!" but "How interesting of me to prefer it to society!" . . . With the new intimacy—the Moore intimacy—there arrived, true to the law by which neither misfortunes nor joys come single, the obvious opening for another. Rogers was a frequenter of Holland House, and Byron's projected débût in the Lords was spoken of by him in that high political and literary sphere. The topic naturally interested Lord Holland, for he was then Recorder of Nottingham, and he intended, like Byron, to oppose the Bill. Only one thing stood between them: the offensive lines on him and Lady Holland in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. It would be difficult for one who had written as Byron had of the hospitalities of their table to be offered, or to accept, them. Of that peer whose exquisite temper so affected all who knew him—Brougham, writing of its irresistible charm, said that in his "whole experience of our race, he never saw such a temper, or anything that at all resembled it"—few more characteristic traits are recorded than the manner in which he solved this problem. Lord Holland, a distinguished man of nearly forty, allowed himself to be brought to the lodgings of the then almost wholly obscure youth of twenty-three, and there and thus introduced to him! Dallas was present, and "thought it a curious event". His jealousy, always acute and now growing ever acuter, prevented him, one surmises, from seeing or saying that it was something

much more than that. Byron was "evidently awkward"; no one else showed any embarrassment at all. . . . And so an intercourse began which was to continue in the same sense—of frequent kindness from Lord Holland, and warm, remorseful gratitude from Byron, culminating in the suppression, then and for ever, so far as the author was concerned, of the fifth (and every previous) edition of *English Bards.* Directly *Childe Harold* appeared, Byron sent a copy to Holland House, and alluded shyly but feelingly to the magnanimity which had been shown him, quoting (the error is, in him, worth recording) a line of Dryden's as one of Pope's! . . . Soon afterwards he became an intimate at the house; soon afterwards, for that matter, an intimate at any house he chose. "Splendid crowds courted his society"—and no wonder; for to read a work of genius, see the author, and see him the dazzling, perplexing, fascinating thing that Byron was, might turn steadier heads than those of "that sex, whose weakness it is" (I will not dispute it: let Moore speak for the women of his day) "to be most easily won by those who come recommended by the greatest number of triumphs over others".

For of course the "splendid crowds" were led by the women, commandeered by the women . . . and is it not an occasion for amused conjecture to remember, for an instant, the other men? How did *they* like it?

CHAPTER XII

LADY CAROLINE LAMB

Lady Caroline Ponsonby—The "Beautiful Duchess" of Devonshire—Lady Betty Foster—Caroline's girlhood—William Lamb—The marriage of Caroline—1812, and Byron—Lady Melbourne—Caroline's letter to Medwin—Lamb's apathy—Byron's letter: was it a forgery?—The rupture—Lady Heathcote's ball—The last "scene"—Letters in 1816—Lamb's vacillation—*Glenarvon*—Her share in the rumours of 1816—Her life afterwards: letters to Godwin—The news from Greece: 1824—The meeting—Bulwer Lytton—Death of Caroline Lamb

ON June 3, 1805—before Byron had left Harrow!—there took place in the most brilliant and talked-of set in London a wedding, of which the news, in a letter from his mother, drew from one Augustus Foster, Secretary of Legation at Washington, the following written comments. "I cannot fancy Lady Caroline married. I cannot be glad of it. How changed she must be—the delicate Ariel, the little Fairy Queen, become a wife and soon perhaps a mother! She is under the laws of a Man. It is the first death of a woman. They must die twice, for I am sure all their friends, their male friends at least, receive a pang when they change character so completely". But when his mother[1] wrote again, she was able to console him to some extent. "You may retract all your sorrow about

[1] She was Lady Elizabeth Foster, daughter of the fourth Earl of Bristol and Bishop of Derry; she married first J. Foster, M.P.; second, the fifth Duke of Devonshire.

Caroline Ponsonby's marriage, for she is the same wild, delicate, odd, delightful person, unlike everything". Already she had been characteristic: she had written to welcome a new sister-in-law into the family, and had dated the letter from her husband's country-house, on "heaven knows what day".

A girl who can inspire such whimsical and fantastic feeling (for Augustus Foster, though notoriously susceptible, had never been at all in love with her) seems marked out for an unusual destiny; and indeed from her earliest years, Caroline Ponsonby had known only strangeness in all her surroundings. She was the one daughter of the third Earl of Bessborough, by his wife Lady Henrietta Spencer, daughter of the first Earl Spencer, and sister of Georgiana, the "Beautiful Duchess" of Devonshire. When Caroline (born on November 13, 1785) was a baby of three, her mother had a paralytic stroke and was sent to Italy to recover. She took her little daughter with her, but, growing worse instead of better, soon returned to England, and left the child behind. Not until she was nine years old did Caroline see mother or home again; and home, when she did see it, meant only England, for "my angel-mother" (as she called Lady Bessborough) was still too ill to undertake her, and so she was sent to her Aunt Georgiana at Devonshire House, and brought up with her young Cavendish cousins.

The Devonshire marriage had been purely *de convenance* on the Duchess's side. At seventeen Georgiana Spencer had been married, and had soon found that it was to "the personified quintessence of English apathy"—capable, nevertheless, of blazing infidelity. She had been ready for domesticity—carefully trained by a notably pious mother, and in herself most tender, natural, and kind. Witty and

lovely—the "Juno" of the Three Graces[1] who inspired a popular epigram—she was quite unspoiled by the adulation which had from childhood been her daily bread. But she was spirited, too (she, the descendant of Sarah Jennings!), and pondering on her Duke, she decided that his faithlessness, consolable though it might leave her, absolved her from any extreme devotion to his service. She threw herself into political life; Devonshire House became the fortress of the Whig Coalition which gathered round the Prince of Wales, and included Charles James Fox and Richard Brinsley Sheridan. That phase culminated in 1784—a year before the birth of her niece, Caroline Ponsonby—in the famous Kiss for the Vote. Fox was the candidate for the Long-acre butcher's suffrage. . . . Need the consequence of either sort be recorded? Fox won; and the Duchess of Devonshire, so far as her social prestige was concerned, lost. Her name was thenceforward inseparably connected with Fox's—and soon not only with his. Her son was said to be now Fox's, now the Prince of Wales's, now not hers at all but Lady Elizabeth Foster's, changed at nurse for a daughter of the Duchess. Some years after the great electioneering campaign, Fanny Burney met her at Bath, and, though she was despoiled of her beauty and deeply melancholy, said of her that "the word charming might have been invented expressly to describe her". She was then accompanied everywhere by her inseparable—that Lady "Betty" Foster who, when the Duchess died in 1806, was to write of her "unceasing regrets for the angelic, the unequalled qualities of my loved, my adored friend, since whose death I have lived in a sort of stupor"; and was to marry, in 1809, the Duke of Devonshire, that friend's

[1] The others were the Duchesses of Gordon and Rutland.

widower—of whom she had been for many years the mistress.

Caroline Ponsonby, brought up (if it could be called bringing-up) by her brilliant and then entirely undomesticated Aunt Georgiana, looked back upon her childhood with pure amazement. Never were babies so neglected as the small grandees of Devonshire House, who, served on silver in the morning, would carry their costly plates into the kitchen, among the ever-quarrelling servants, to beg for their favourite tit-bits. The Marquis of Hartington, aged fourteen months, had his own house, carriage, servants; all the children believed that horses fed on beef, that bread and butter "grew" in loaves and pats, that anybody who was not a duke or a marquis must be a beggar, and that dukes and marquises could never spend all their money, no matter how much they spent, for beggars having none, *they* must have all there was. Her grandmother, Lady Spencer, to whose care Lady Bessborough soon removed her, surveyed the product of this training with uneasiness. Something more than the usual childish naughtiness seemed to emerge, and soon the family doctor was sent for to examine her. He ordered her to be taught nothing, and to be kept as far as possible from "seeing people", for the violent passions and caprices that she showed might, if not restrained, lead in the end to madness. The result was that at ten, the little Lady Caroline could not yet read. But when at fifteen she began to learn, she showed extraordinary eagerness. The modern languages were not enough for her; Greek and Latin were voluntarily undertaken, and in her later apotheosis, one of the great distinctions was her recital of the Odes

of Sappho. She loved music too, and listened to it with that excessive sensibility which, in 1816, led her sparkling cousin, Harriet Cavendish (then Lady Granville) to say of a reading by Benjamin Constant: "I have begged that Caroline may be present, to cry and make sensation for us". She painted, played, caricatured ("never spitefully"), and as she grew up, became noted for unusual and picturesque attire. Disdainful, or more accurately, heedless (for this was a true original) of the mode in dress, she was no less unconventional in her social attitude. To talk of the weather, of how everybody was, of "arrangements"—why you had or had not gone or come to one place, when and how you were going to the next . . . all this was by Caroline Ponsonby not to be endured. Facts eluded her; once, in asking that a book might be sent to her brother, she confessed that she forgot the number of his house; we have seen already that she could date on "heaven knows what day"; and in 1811 there is a letter from her to Lady Morgan, then Miss Sydney Owenson, apologising for not having sent her carriage for this new friend, as had been arranged. "I could never have imagined it possible for me to forget your address"; but she *had* forgotten it, and had been obliged to entrust her apology to a vague sketch of a direction, from which ordeal the Post-Office emerged triumphantly.

Already, as a schoolgirl, this bewildering creature had met, fascinated, and fallen in love with, her future husband. At twelve she had read some verses of his, and had heard that he was a friend of Charles James Fox. That was enough; she "longed to meet him"—just as, fourteen years later, she was to read the somewhat more remarkable verses of another young man, and long to meet him too. . . . With her thirteenth year came this first encounter. There arrived at Brocket Hall

(where she was visiting with her cousins) the nineteen-yeared William Lamb, son of Lord Melbourne and of Elizabeth Milbanke, only daughter of Sir Ralph Milbanke, of Halnaby in Yorkshire—one of the loveliest, cleverest, and most ambitious women of her day. . . . As soon as William Lamb beheld his youthful admirer, he said, "Of all the Devonshire House girls, that is the one for me!"

Brocket Hall in Hertfordshire was the smaller country-house of the Melbournes, who were among the *richissimes* of their day. They possessed, besides, Melbourne Manor in Derbyshire, and Melbourne House in Whitehall.[1] The second son, William, was born on March 13, 1779.[2] His elder brother, Peniston, then nine years old, was his father's darling to such a degree that Lady Melbourne despaired of ever winning any paternal affection for William. Her presage proved correct. In Torrens's[3] book no explanation of this peculiar coldness is given; in Dunckley's,[4] on the contrary, so much is hinted that Lord Melbourne's attitude towards the second son becomes all too explicable. The Prince of Wales was a constant guest at Melbourne House, and when on his attaining his majority and being established at Carlton House, Lord Melbourne was named his Gentleman of the Bedchamber, Dunckley remarks that the qualification for the post "had best be

[1] It occupied the space between the Horse Guards and the Treasury, and was called, familiarly, the Round House; officially, before the Melbournes had it, York House, for the Duke of York lived there; he "exchanged houses" with the Melbournes. Theirs was a magnificent mansion in Piccadilly—now the Albany region.

[2] To the superstitious in numbers it is worth pointing out the dominance of the sinister thirteen in Caroline Lamb's dates. She and William Lamb were both born on the thirteenth of the month; she met him at thirteen; it was in 1813 that the rupture between her and Byron culminated in the famous scene at Lady Heathcote's ball.

[3] Torrens, *Memoirs of Viscount Melbourne.* 1878.

[4] H. Dunckley ("Verax"), *Lord Melbourne.* 1890. In "The Queen's Prime Ministers" Series, edited by Stuart Reid.

regarded as inscrutable". There was Fox too, and there was the fascinating Lord Egremont, "all of whose children", said the Greville Memoirs, "are illegitimate". Many years after Lady Melbourne's death, many after the death of every one connected with this history, Lord Melbourne (formerly William Lamb) was showing to Landseer a portrait of Lord Egremont which hung in one of his houses. With Landseer's first glance at the face, he wheeled round involuntarily to examine his host's. "Ah, you're thinking of the old story", said Melbourne coolly. "There's nothing in it".

Whether there was anything in it or not, the first Lord Melbourne as nearly as might be repudiated him. When Peniston died in 1805, Lady Melbourne tried to obtain for her favourite the allowance of £5000 a year which the elder son had enjoyed. All her powers of persuasion failed; she then induced a friend to remonstrate—but in vain. William must do with £2000, which was "quite enough for him". He was then twenty-six, very handsome, something of a fop, yet with a fine air of carelessness which enhanced everything that he did, said, and wore; "nobody ever *happened* to have coats that fitted better". He was a friend of Brummell, but (despite the faultless coats) Brummell's way of life seemed to William Lamb unworthy of an intelligent being. He had his own affectation, however, as we all have, and that was a desire to be thought indolent, careless, haphazard. But in the brilliant countenance, with the large eyes so unusually well-opened, there was a kind of "suppressed glow" which contradicted the drawl and the yawn—though these were not entirely histrionic. William Lamb *could* be bored, he *was* lazy —is not his falling asleep in Queen Victoria's presence an historical triumph? for she, ordinarily so punctilious, would suffer no one to disturb her loved and then

aging Minister. . . . But his boredom was impatience with the unessential, his laziness, perception of the impossible, or at any rate undesirable, activity: once let Lamb perceive the essential, the possible, desirable, and the great eyes flashed, the face kindled, the famous "Why can't you leave it alone?" was as though such eager lips could never have uttered it. It was this hidden fervour which attracted to him more and more as they grew up together the ardent Caroline Ponsonby. Before his prospects grew into brilliancy, while he was still a budding lawyer not in any degree distinguished, he proposed to her and she refused, because "I adored him". "I knew I was a fury, and I would not marry him"; but that he might have no doubt of her devotion, she offered to go with him "anywhere" as his clerk. Such a rosy clerk would hardly have advanced his legal career; but in 1805 that had become a thing of the past. He was the future Lord Melbourne now—and at once he offered himself again. This time she yielded, and the wedding took place about which young Augustus Foster was to write and feel so fantastically.

Caroline was nineteen and a half, and William Lamb twenty-six. Already she was the star of the drawing-rooms, the most talked-of, written-of girl of her period —hung about with pretty nicknames, of which she was vain enough to make a list in her commonplace-book. Sprite, Young Savage, Ariel, Squirrel, Fairy Queen, Her Lavishship—do they not bring before us the tiny, eager, slender thing with her fawn-flaxen hair "shot with gold", her great dark eyes, her low, caressing voice (that "beauty and charm to which she owed the greater part of her fascination",[1] according to Lady Morgan),

[1] "Despite a certain artificial drawl, habitual to the Devonshire House set", said Lord Lytton in his description of her as she was in 1824. He

LADY CAROLINE LAMB

FROM THE PAINTING BY JOHN HOPPNER, R.A., IN THE POSSESSION OF EARL SPENCER

her vivacity, sweetness, kindness, folly—and "fury"? At her very wedding, she—"dreadfully nervous, but prettier than ever I saw her", as Lady Betty Foster told Augustus—flew into a rage with the officiating bishop, and tore her exquisite gown to pieces, then fainted, and had to be borne out to the carriage like that! But though so ill-inaugurated, the honeymoon days were good: at Brocket Hall we have seen that she had lost count of time. "*It won't last*": did the Cavendish cousins—Georgiana and the mordant Harriet—whisper that to one another, knowing their Caroline?

If they did, they proved true prophets. Adored by a delightful husband, and rich, young, brilliant, fascinating, one would have called Caroline Lamb the spoiled child of fortune—and that is precisely what she was. Like the spoiled child, she cried for the moon; and, more spoiled and more unhappy than he, was given it. . . . But though they quarrelled, and were often, as she said, "very troublesome to one another", until 1812 there was no scandal. She had three children, of whom only one survived—that son, born in 1807, whom the young mother carried Miss Berry, the famous blue-stocking, up to a room "at the top of a house in Whitehall" to see asleep in his cradle. Next day he was seized with fits; it was thought they must be fatal; but he survived—unhappily, as it proved, for the godson of the Prince of Wales, named by him George Augustus Frederick, never attained to full mental stature. He remained all his life, which lasted until he was twenty-nine, what he was at the beginning—a gentle, sweet-natured, obedient child: "to his father a grief incurable".

Caroline grew ever more wayward; her restlessness

adds to her list of attractions one which others have omitted: "exceedingly good teeth" (*Life, Letters, etc., of Lord Lytton*, 1883, by his son).

and caprice were inordinate. From one moment to another her relatives did not know what they might hear. . . . But the moment was fast approaching in which they were at least to know with whose name everything that they did hear would be connected. It was 1812—the year when "language can hardly exaggerate the folly that prevailed"—the year of the Byron Fever.

To her, whose verdict upon a book was still, despite her eccentricities, the making or unmaking of it no less in the *salons* than in the mere drawing-rooms, Rogers took care to lend his very early copy of *Childe Harold.*

She read it, summoned the lender. "I must see him—I am dying to see him!"

"He has a club-foot," said Rogers. "And he bites his nails".

"If he is as ugly as Æsop, I must see him!"

Soon, at Lady Westmorland's,[1] she did see him. Her hostess led her up "to be introduced". The Queen of the Drawing-Rooms submitted to that—it gives one the measure of his vogue!—but when, coming nearer to the god, she beheld "all the women throwing up their heads at him", a swift revulsion seized her. She stood at gaze a moment; then turned on her heel, and walked away.

That night she wrote in her diary the only wise words, perhaps, that she ever used with respect to him—the renowned phrase: *Mad, bad, and dangerous to know.* But another phrase, as renowned, though not confided to paper on the first, triumphant evening, was sounding in her soul: *That beautiful pale face is my fate.* . . . Two days later, she was calling at Holland House when

[1] Whom Byron had met at Algeciras, at the beginning of the Pilgrimage, in 1809.

Lord Byron was announced. He was of course presented to her, and he said directly: "This offer was made to you the other day—may I ask why you declined it?" She does not record her answer; his next move was to ask permission to come and see her. She was then living at Melbourne House (the William Lambs had no separate establishment) which "was the centre of all gaiety, at least in appearance"; and when Byron arrived on the following morning, he found her with Rogers and Moore.[1] In her account of the visit, there emerges strikingly the coarseness of phraseology which then prevailed. She was among the great *élégantes* of her day; her speech, semi-"blue" though she might be, was the speech of fashion—and here are the words she used to describe her condition after the morning's ride. She had just returned from it: "I was on the sofa, *filthy and heated*"! Our slangiest modern Diana would shrink from such vernacular—but that Caroline's noted eccentricity may be proved to have nothing to do with it, let me finish the story. "When Lord Byron was announced, I flew to change my habit. When I came back, Rogers said, 'Lord Byron, you are a lucky man. Here has Lady Caroline been *sitting in all her dirt* with us, but as soon as you were announced, she fled to make herself beautiful'".

The *partie carrée* did not satisfy Byron. He intimated that he would like to come and see her when she was alone, preferably at dinner. "I said he might.

[1] She said in after-years to Lady Morgan: "Rogers and Moore were both my lovers; I was in the clouds". Neither was, in any degree of the accepted sense, her lover; but only a malicious insistence on that single definition can turn this statement into a weapon for those who accuse her of boundless vanity. Every woman of her sensuous, intellectual type has the "platonic" lover as well as the real one, distinguishes unerringly between the two, and knows that any understanding friend will understand that she can do so. Lady Morgan assuredly understood: the same thing had been part of her own experience from the first days of girlhood.

From that moment, for more than nine months he almost lived at Melbourne House".

Melbourne House, we must remember, had other attractions besides hers. One of the most delightful women in, and of, the world, was its mistress. Lady Melbourne, now sixty-two, and a little withdrawn into herself, nevertheless felt Byron's spell, and he felt hers. "The best friend I ever had in my life, and the cleverest of women", he wrote in the Journal of 1813. "If she had been a few years younger, what a fool she would have made of me, had she thought it worth her while —and I should have lost a most valuable and agreeable *friend*". She found him really congenial, and confided to him many matters which, taught by bitter lessons, she hesitated to confide to anybody else. . . . Did Lady Melbourne, then, so sagacious, cynical, experienced as she was, suspect nothing of what was going on in her son's quarters? It must have been fairly evident. Before Byron's advent, the great furore in those quarters had been waltzing. It had but just been introduced, and the prejudice it had excited was still in force; at Devonshire House, for instance (where the second wife, the Bishop's daughter, now reigned), it was not allowed. Lord Hartington enjoyed it; he "wanted", wrote Caroline, "to have waltzes and quadrilles . . . so we had them in the great drawing-room at Whitehall. All the *bon ton* assembled there continually. There was nothing so fashionable. *But after a time Byron contrived to sweep them all away*". That is significant of two things: his egotism, and his influence. Dancing had always irritated the morbid creature who could not join in it; yet with girlish Mary Chaworth in 1804, he had not prevailed. With married, fashionable Caroline Lamb he prevailed at once. She was unable to refuse him anything; all that she could sacrifice,

indeed, was his before he asked for it. Her first letter to him—it is said to have been delivered by herself, figuring as her own page—contained not only the offer of her love, but of all her jewels if he should ever be in need of money. That was Caroline Lamb all over. She would do anything for the people she liked, but "it was hazardous to refuse the offer". Alas! it was no less hazardous to accept it. She was unacquainted with moderation, with reserve, with patience. Exacting and violent, egotistic (even Lady Morgan, who really cared for her, said that for all her eloquence and graceful, gracious expression, her subject was always herself), impulsive beyond belief . . . such a mistress was foredoomed to disaster with such a lover. He had every fault of hers, in full measure; and had, for women, none of her chief virtue, generosity.

But when one speaks of happiness with reference to any woman's relations with Byron, one is bringing two irreconcilable things into sharp opposition. The woman did not live, has never lived, who could reconcile them. Obsessed as he was by the idea of woman, at bottom Byron despised her wholly; and no one can be happy with, or make happy, a creature scorned. Always to tyrannise, humiliate, wound, her he had fascinated, in revenge as it were for the power upon him with which mere sex endowed her, was to him the game of love—for in life, he saw love only as a game. In his poetry, it is true, the passion is exalted, the woman frequently "wins"—but always, let us perceive, by abnegation of her very being. She is the lovely loving slave, or else she is the tigress, and his tigress never even in appearance wins. Unless she, so to speak, ceases to be, except as an instrument of passion, she is punished invariably—by remorse, or death, or shame. I hold no brief for the tigress. All that Byron

sang of gentleness, devotion, sacrifice, may find an echo in most women's hearts; but there is a wide distinction between our choice, and man's proclamation of its sole rightness for us.

Caroline Lamb was a good deal both of slave and tigress. Her "wild, delicate" nature seized instinctively upon the drama of the alternating relations. Since she was untamed, how exciting to submit; since she had submitted, how exciting to rebel! It was a perpetual balance between the two extremes: now she would be kneeling before a man, now (the Charles Kembles saw her do both in Paris with her husband, from their hotel-window which commanded hers) springing up in a fury from that attitude, and dashing the china to the floor. . . . When she did such things with Byron, he would assume the posture which had always so successfully infuriated his mother—standing coolly to watch, and interjecting a gibe at the most theatrical moment. Then would come the tears and the vehement remorse, and the bored, contemptuous forgiveness. . . . But let us trace the incidents of their two-yeared conflict, wherein she skirmished long after all was decided against her.

One day he came to Melbourne House with a rose and a carnation in his fingers. It was before the season of either—in the early spring of 1812—and, presenting them, he said with a half-sarcastic smile, "Your Ladyship, I am told, likes all that is new and rare—for a moment". A day or two afterwards, she wrote, "on blue-bordered paper, embossed at the corners with scallop-shells", one of her "pretty" letters. It is in the third person; all the vague sentimentality of the time informs it. The Rose had died, "probably from

regret at its fallen fortunes". She was going to Brocket Hall, but would soon be back, and then he was to receive a book with a picture of the Flower she wished most to resemble. It was the sunflower: we can guess, before we read, the reason for choosing it! "Having once beheld in its full lustre the sun that for one moment condescended to shine upon it, never while it exists could it think any lower object worthy of its worship and admiration". And when the "little Page" brings the submissive image, she hopes it will be graciously received without any more Taunts about "Love of what is New". As to *that* fault, she does not plead guilty, but if she did, would attempt no excuses. She is full of faults that any one might see on the shortest acquaintance, but "there is not one, though long indulged, that shall not be instantly got rid of if Lord Byron thinks it worth while to name them".[1]

Little wonder if he believed he had found the lovely loving slave of his imaginings! But at first, all was platonic. He would spend whole hours at Melbourne House in the mornings, talking gently, gravely, in the incomparable voice, while he held on his knee caressingly the little boy about whom such apprehensions now hovered. Other devices too were brought into play—the famous "marble heart", the Byronic remorse and inverted hypocrisy: he would compare himself with her husband—"as much above me as Hyperion above the Satyr"; and she, listening, felt surer every day that he was hers as she was his. Read her infinitely touching letter[2] to Medwin in November 1824, when the *Conversations with Lord Byron* had done its work of ruining her finally. She had been very ill; she had read—in that unpardonable book—read for the first

[1] *L. and J.* ii. App. iii. p. 446.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 451.

time[1] the terrible stanzas of "Remember thee!" . . . "I feel secure the lines were his", she writes in her anguish. "Let me confide to you at least the truth of the past—you owe it to me—you will not I know refuse me. . . . Byron never never could say I have no heart. He never could say, either, that I had not loved my husband. In his letters to me he is perpetually telling me I love him the best of the two; and my only charm, believe me, in his eyes was, that I was innocent, affectionate, and enthusiastic. . . . Let me not go down in your book as heartless.[2] Tell the truth; it is bad enough, but not what is worse. . . . I was not a woman of the world. Had I been one of that sort, why would he have devoted nine entire months almost entirely to my society; have written perhaps ten times a day; and lastly have pressed me to leave all and go with him, and this at the very moment when he was made an Idol of, and when, as he and you justly observe, I had few personal attractions. Indeed, indeed, I tell the truth. Byron did not affect—but he loved me as never woman was loved. . . . Besides, he was then very good, to what he grew afterwards; and, his health being delicate, he liked to read with me and stay with me out of the crowd. Not but what we went about everywhere together, and

[1] "Remember thee! remember thee!
Till Lethe quench life's burning stream,
Remorse and shame shall cling to thee,
And haunt thee like a feverish dream!

Remember thee! Aye, doubt it not,
Thy husband too shall think of thee:
By neither shalt thou be forgot,
Thou *false* to him, thou *fiend* to me!"

The stanzas were first published by Medwin.

[2] In the "New Edition" of the *Conversations*, published later in the year 1824, not one word of these confidences from Byron stands; there is merely a passing reference to *Glenarvon*. The verses, too, are suppressed.

were at last invited always as if we had been married. It was a strange scene—but it was not vanity misled me. I grew to love him better than virtue, Religion—all prospects here. He broke my heart, and still I love him".

We read, turning from her indictment of herself, the comments of the time. Rogers's, the Duchess of Devonshire's, Harriet Countess Granville's, Galt's, Dallas's—in all she is condemned. She "absolutely besieged him", said Rogers, the friend of both, who firmly believed what no one else did, or does, believe: that there was nothing "criminal" between them. He tells of her endless indiscretions and absurdities; how he, Rogers, would come home late at night, and find her walking about in his garden, waiting for him. "We have had a quarrel, and I want you to reconcile him to me". . . . She would return from parties where she had met Byron, in Byron's carriage, he accompanying her; all the way from Holland House they once drove thus together. If she was not invited to a party where Byron was to be, she would wait in the street for him till it was over. One night, after a great affair at Devonshire House to which she had not been bidden, Rogers saw her—"yes, saw her"—"talking to Byron with half of her body thrust into the carriage which he had just entered". . . . And all through society ran rumours of her raids upon Byron's rooms, oftenest disguised as a page (she had a veritable mania for pages!), but once, in the latter days as a common carman, admitted by the valet Fletcher, who did not recognise her. And what was that to her lamentable proceeding with the valet himself, when she wrote and asked him to come and see her "some evening at 9, and no one will know of it. . . . I want you to take the little Foreign Page I shall send, in to Lord Byron. . . . *Do not think it is me*". It was

so that the great lady, the wife and mother, wrote to her lover's servant! Well might Byron say, in one of his earliest letters to her, that all her gifts were "unfortunately coupled with a want of common conduct".

Did no one try to guide her? Was this an occasion when William Lamb murmured, "Why can't you leave it alone?" *She* said it was; she told Lady Morgan that her husband cared nothing for her morals. "He was privy to my affair with Lord Byron, and laughed at it. His indolence rendered him insensible to everything. When I ride, play, and amuse him, he loves me. In sickness and suffering he deserts me. His violence is as bad as my own". Let us examine this statement, remembering what she also said in 1823: "My husband was my guardian angel". Which are we to believe, for both cannot be true? We must believe that William Lamb saw, rightly or wrongly, but at any rate sincerely, in this case the case where nothing can be done. All through her wild, unhappy book, *Glenarvon*, the cry, "Where are you, Avondale?" resounds.[1] "Be my saviour, Avondale!" implores Calantha (who stood for herself). "Who knows where this capricious will of mine may lead me?" Calantha blames her husband for his coldness and indifference; ambition in him has supplanted love; she seeks for their lost happiness in "guilty passion". . . . If Lamb *had* intervened? We must grant something to his experience of her violence, her self-will; something also to his pride—it is ill confessing to such jealousies; something, again, to the insanity of the time about Byron. It was the fashion to be in love with the author of *Childe Harold*, and Caroline was always, though with a difference, in the fashion. When the mode passed, her love, thought Lamb, would pass with it! Add to this the scorn that

[1] William Lamb was the original of "Avondale".

other men must justifiably have begun to feel for the "*hot-pressed* darling of the drawing-rooms" (as Byron himself described himself at this period), and we can watch without indignation the shrug, the glance, of William Lamb at his too-glittering rival, can hear without contempt the "Why can't you leave it alone?" with which he would silence his recurrent uneasiness and anger. And moreover, the morals of the age! Hardly a woman in his sphere whose name was not coupled with a lover's. Wherever he looked, there was, or had been, intrigue. Had he divined, as he grew up, by his father's attitude, anything of the gossip about his mother? Had he heard, again, anything of the monstrous scandal about Caroline's — not to be mentioned yet? Small marvel if William Lamb was cynical, less still if he was apathetic.

Lady Melbourne did not love her fantastic daughter-in-law. The match had pleased her well enough; the wife, as time went on, had not. Caroline had already made herself absurd, and now she was making herself notorious. If she must fall in love with Lord Byron—and Lady Melbourne granted him all his charm—let her at least do it decently! But that was precisely what Caroline was incapable of doing. The mother-in-law did speak at last; but she spoke to Byron. He answered with a reminder, in the best manner of *Childe Harold*, of the Marble Heart. Such an absurdity can never for a moment have deceived such a woman.

Hobhouse, the serene and lucid, was active on the side of the angels during the very tumultuous days. Lady Bessborough, ill, tormented by the scandal, had enlisted him, and in his Journal for the summer of 1812, we find three consecutive entries.

"*June* 30.—Found an odd note from Lady Bessborough".

"*July* 2.—Called on Lady Bessborough—a very curious scene".

"*July* 3.—Note from Lady Bessborough. Went to Byron, who agrees to go out of town". . . . On July 6, he finds on his table "most strange letters from Melbourne House"; ten days later, goes "by desire to Lady Bessborough's. In midst of our conversation in comes Lady C. Lamb, who talked of Lady Bessborough and myself looking guilty. Here's a pass for the world to come to!" To fastidious Hobhouse, the gross bad taste of such an *agacerie*—and unhappily it was in the frequent tone of Caroline's—would indeed be little short of a portent.

If Byron kept his promise of going out of town at all, he quickly returned, for on the 19th Hobhouse dined with him. Lady Bessborough soon heard that the lovers "had gone off together". It was not true, but the rumour was enough to make her fall dangerously ill. "She broke a blood-vessel", says Caroline in her letter to Medwin. "Byron would not believe it, but it was true. When he was convinced, we parted". . . . He was "convinced" in another raid from his mistress, who "forced herself into his rooms, and implored him to fly with her". He refused, took her back to Melbourne House, and wrote that letter which all who read must regard as one of the many enigmas of his story. As Rabbe[1] says, "It is difficult to believe it authentic". It is so difficult that there flashes into memory an affair in January 1813, when Caroline forged so skilfully a letter in Byron's name that John Murray, on receiving it, transferred to her a miniature (the one by Sanders) which had been left in his charge. She at once confessed to Byron that she had done this, and he wrote to Murray[2] that "the culprit" had put herself into his

[1] Félix Rabbe, *Les Maîtresses authentiques de Lord Byron.*

[2] *L. and J.* ii. 185.

hands, adding, *more suo*, very unmistakable indications of who that culprit was. . . . I hesitate to present this as a theory; rather let me call it a flash of supposition, born of the extreme unlikeness of this letter[1] to all of Byron's, and its close likeness to all of hers that we have. The date is uncertain, but we may place it with some confidence—if he wrote it—in the end of July or beginning of August 1812.

"My Dearest Caroline,—If tears which you saw and know I am not apt to shed—if the agitation in which I parted from you—agitation which you must have perceived through the *whole* of this most *nervous* affair, did not commence until the moment of leaving you approached—if all I have said and done, and am still but too ready to say and do, have not sufficiently proved what my real feelings are, and must ever be towards you, my love, I have no other proof to offer. God knows, I wish you happy, and when I quit you, or rather you, from a sense of duty to your husband and mother, quit me, you shall acknowledge the truth of what I again promise and vow, that no other in word or deed, shall ever hold the place in my affections, which is, and shall be, most sacred to you, until I am nothing. I never knew till *that moment* the *madness* of my dearest and most beloved friend; I cannot express myself; this is no time for words, but I shall have a pride, a melancholy pleasure, in suffering what you yourself can scarcely conceive, for you do not know me. I am about to go out with a heavy heart, because my

[1] She sent the letter—the "original": she who at another time would part with none of Byron's letters—to Lady Morgan, enclosed in one of her own. Mr. Prothero prints from the Murray MSS. (*L. and J.* ii. 135). Jeaffreson, who also prints the letter, says that *his* copy was made from the original MS. There are differences between his version and Mr. Prothero's; I use the latter.

appearing this evening will stop any absurd story which the event of the day might give rise to. Do you think *now* I am *cold* and *stern* and *artful*? Will even others think so? Will your *mother* ever — that mother to whom we must indeed sacrifice more, much more on my part than she shall ever know or can imagine? 'Promise not to love you!' ah, Caroline, it is past promising. But I shall attribute all concessions to the proper motive, and never cease to feel all that you have already witnessed, and more than can ever be known but to my own heart — perhaps to yours. May God protect, forgive, and bless you.—Ever, and even more than ever, your most attached, BYRON

"*P.S.*—These taunts which have driven you to this, my dearest Caroline, were it not for your mother and the kindness of your connections, is there anything on earth or heaven that would have made me so happy as to have made you mine long ago? and not less *now* than *then*, but *more* than ever at this time. You know I would with pleasure give up all here and all beyond the grave for you, and in refraining from this, must my motives be misunderstood? I care not who knows this, what use is made of it—it is to *you* and to *you* only that they are *yourself* [*sic*]. I was and am yours freely and most entirely, to obey, to honour, love—and fly with you when, where, and how you yourself *might* and *may* determine".

Idle to discuss this, if Byron wrote it! It does not offer any aspect for reason to consider. He did not love her; he was not faithful to her even at the height of their intrigue. To say, as some do, that he wrote to gratify, to soothe her, because he had so resolutely refused "to fly" . . . whatever the letter stands for, it does not

stand for that. Either it represents his mere madness of a moment, or it represents her dream of what he might have written her, and never did, or could, write her. . . . I said just now that my conjecture was hesitating; but, as I copied, it increased in confidence. The phrases are not those which enter a man's mind —that "obey, honour, love", for instance, which is, or was, the very cant-phrase of a woman's passion! And then, the postscript. "These taunts which have driven you to this" . . . does not that read like the afterthought of a woman publicly scorned, who shields herself at the vulnerable point? Does it not read as if people had said, "He doesn't want you"? They *had* said it, as we see in every letter of the period; and then, when all was gone by, she wrote to her friend Lady Morgan of the long anguish, and sent the wild disordered missive, where he is "hers to fly when, where, and how she may determine". With such a message in her heart, would she have consented—reckless and impassioned creature that she was—to be taken to Ireland by her parents, as she was taken at that time? It is "difficult", indeed, "to believe it authentic".

Well, letter or no letter, she went to Ireland, and remained there (we have only her own authority for it, in the letter to Medwin) "three months". "He wrote, every day, long kind entertaining letters", she says; "it is these he asked Murray to look out[1] . . . but I would not part with them . . . they would only burn them . . . and nothing of his should be burnt". The Bessboroughs and she returned in a month, if we are to believe the testimony of her cousin Harriet;[2]

[1] *L. and J.* v. 379; with a warning as to "*forgeries*". "They treat of more topics than love occasionally".

[2] "The Bessboroughs", writes Lady H. Leveson Gower (as Harriet Cavendish then was) from her house in Staffordshire, on September 12,

in November, if we accept her own date. But the point, though interesting, is not of cardinal importance; at both dates, Byron was closely *lié* with Lady Oxford, whose coronet and initials adorned the seal of the letter quoted in *Glenarvon*, and who was afterwards said to have dictated it. It was at Dublin, on her way back to England, that Caroline received it. Here it is, as given in *Glenarvon*, sole text for these acknowledged words—for Byron *acknowledged* that what we are now to read had formed at any rate part of the original document.

"MORTANVILLE PRIORY, *November* 9[1]

"LADY AVONDALE,—I am no longer your lover; and since you oblige me to confess it, by this truly unfeminine persecution . . . learn that I am attached to another, whose name it would be dishonourable to mention. I shall ever remember with gratitude the many instances I have received of the predilection you have shown in my favour. I shall ever continue your friend, if your ladyship will permit me so to style myself; and, as a first proof of my regard, I offer you this advice: correct your vanity, which is ridiculous; exert your absurd caprices on others; and leave me in peace.—Your most obedient servant,

"GLENARVON"

1812, "have been unpacked about a couple of hours. My aunt looks stout and well, but poor Caroline most terribly the contrary. She is worn to the bone, as pale as death, and her eyes starting out of her head. She seems indeed in a sad way, alternately in tearing spirits and in tears . . . to see her poor careworn face is dismal. . . . She appears to me in a state very little short of insanity, and my aunt describes it as at times having been decidedly so. . . . Caro. has been excessively entertaining at supper. Her spirits, while they last, seem as ungovernable as her grief. . . . Poor Lord Bessborough *me pèse sur le cœur et l'esprit.* William Lamb laughs and eats like a trooper" (*Letters of Harriet, Countess Granville*, i. 40, 41).

[1] This "imaginary" date corresponds with her own.

Does it call for comment—rather, is any comment possible? The thing is simply unspeakable.[1]

More fortunate than the women of to-day, in that age the recipient of such a message could faint off-hand. Caroline fainted. "Then they bled me, and applied leeches" (she told Lady Morgan); "and I had to stay a week at the filthy *Dolphin* Inn, at Rock". She was brought to England a mere wreck, as we have seen: "worn to the bone, as pale as death, her eyes starting out of her head". So alarmed did Lady Bessborough, even Lady Melbourne, become, that they allowed her, on reaching London, to see—for she desired to see—Byron. "He asked me to forgive him; he looked sorry for me; he cried. I adored him still, but I felt as passionless as the dead may feel. Would I had died then!"

Would she had died before then, if we are to talk of dyings! She should never again ("adore" him as she might) have recognised his existence. "But unhappily we continued occasionally to meet". Yes: in June 1813, they met at Lady Heathcote's ball. Let us read first her own story (in the letter to Medwin) of this wretched business.

"He had made me swear I was never to waltz. Lady Heathcote said, 'Come, Lady Caroline, you must begin'; and I bitterly answered, 'Oh yes! I am in a merry humour'. I did so—but whispered to Lord Byron, 'I conclude I may waltz *now*?' and he answered sarcastically, 'With everybody in turn—you always did it better than any one. I shall have a pleasure in

[1] I should like to believe that Lady Oxford did not dictate it. We have only the authority of one "C. Lemon", writing in 1816 to Lady H. Frampton, for the supposition that she did. "This letter she really dictated to Lord Byron to send to Lady Caroline Lamb, and is now very much offended that she has treated the matter so lightly as to introduce it into her book" (*Journal of Mary Frampton*, pp. 286, 287).

seeing you'. I did so—you may judge with what feelings. After this, feeling ill, I went into a small inner room where supper was prepared; Lord Byron and Lady Rancliffe[1] entered after; seeing me, he said, 'I have been admiring your dexterity'. I clasped a knife, not intending anything. 'Do, my dear', he said. 'But if you mean to act a Roman's part, mind which way you strike with your knife—be it at your own heart, not mine—you have struck there already'. 'Byron!' I said, and ran away with the knife. I never stabbed myself. It is false. Lady Rancliffe and Tankerville screamed and said I would; people pulled to get it from me; I was terrified; my hand got cut, and the blood came over my gown. I know not what happened after—but this is the very truth. I never held my head up after—never could. It was in all the papers, and put not truly".

It was indeed in all the papers, and in all the letters, and in all the mouths. The *Satirist* for August 1813 had an article headed "Scandalum Magnatum"; one Francis Jackson, writing to his brother on July 3, told "what happened after". "They carried her away, and supposing that she had fainted, brought her a glass of water. She instantly broke the glass, and wounded herself with one of the pieces". Fanny Kemble says that before this, she had tried to throw herself out of the window; Galt says that some declared it was an already broken jelly-glass with which she wounded herself, others, a pair of scissors, and that she tried to cut her throat; he also says that Byron was in another room at the time, when Lord P——, with horror in his face, rushed in to tell him what had happened. He

[1] Lady Rancliffe was sister to the beautiful Lady Adelaide Forbes, of whom Byron wrote to Moore at this time that "he was amazingly inclined to be seriously enamoured".

"knitted his scowl and said, with contemptuous indifference, 'It's only a trick'".

We may believe as little as we choose of all this; her own narrative, so far as she was able to carry it, is instinct with truth. "'*Byron!*' *I said, and ran away with the knife*". We can see the maddened creature; and we do not desire, I think, on that miserable night to see her any longer.

She told Lady Morgan that the *Glenarvon* letter temporarily deprived her of reason. That danger had always hovered, and one incident in the December of 1812 certainly points to some degree of insanity. She was down at Brocket Hall—brooding, miserable; and one day she got together a number of young village-girls, dressed them in white, and burned Byron in effigy, while the girls danced round the pyre. She herself was attired as a page, and spoke, before the bonfire actually began, some doggerel lines of her own composing. Into the fire where the waxen image burned she cast his "book, ring, and chain", and *copies* (!) of his letters.

> "Ah! look not thus on me, so grave, so sad;
> Shake not your heads, and say the lady's mad".[1]

What else could the puzzled little village-maidens think or say—and what else we? . . . Then came the forgery for the miniature; furious letters "threatening my life", as Byron told Hodgson; the ball at Lady Heathcote's; the maddest of all the visits to his rooms —"it *is* true I went to see him as a Carman after all that". . . . Yes; and found, as he told Medwin, another woman with him. Finally, after he had moved into the

[1] The lines are preserved, and endorsed in Augusta Leigh's handwriting, "December 1812".

Albany (which he did on March 28, 1814) came the last scene. "He pressed his lips on mine . . . he said, 'Poor Caro, if every one hates me, you, I see, will never change—no, not with ill usage!' And I said, 'Yes, I *am* changed, and shall come near you no more'. For then he showed me letters, and told me things I cannot repeat, and all my attachment went. This was our last parting scene—well I remember it. It had an effect upon me not to be conceived".

The last "scene", but not the last meeting.

"Shortly after he married, once, Lady Melbourne took me to see his wife in Piccadilly. It was a cruel request, but Lord Byron himself made it. . . . Mrs. Leigh, myself, Lady Melbourne, Lady Noel, and Lady Byron, were in the room. I never looked up. Annabella" [Lady Byron] "was very cold to me. Lord Byron came in and seemed agitated—his hand was cold, but he seemed kind. This was the last time upon this earth I ever met him". . . . It must have been in the March or April of 1815. His wife was her cousin, Anna Isabella (called Annabella) Milbanke. They had never liked one another. Miss Milbanke called her "Beautiful Silliness"; "Fair-Seeming Foolishness"; and Caroline said, when she heard of the engagement, that Byron would "never be able to pull with a woman who went to church *punctually*, understood statistics, and had a bad figure".

When, in 1816, her prophecy was proved true, Caroline wrote twice to Byron, each time urging him to wise action; for, as many chroniclers say of her, she was full of common-sense for everybody except herself. First, she adjures him to "consent to what is for the peace of both parties"—namely, to arrange "nobly and generously" a separation. "They tell me", she adds, "that you have accused me of having spread injurious

reports about you. Had you the heart to say this? I do not greatly believe it. . . . You have often been unkind to me, but never so unkind as this. . . . Oh, Lord Byron, let one who has loved you with a devotion almost profane find favour so far as to incline you to hear her. Sometimes from the mouth of a sinner advice may be received that a proud heart disdains to take from those who are upon an equality with themselves. . . . God bless and soothe you, and preserve you. . . . I cannot believe that you will not act generously in this instance.—Yours, unhappily, as it has proved for me,

"CAROLINE"[1]

And again, referring to the publication of *Fare Thee Well!* in April 1816,[2] she cries, "Byron, hear me. . . . I do implore you for God's sake not to publish them . . . you will draw ruin on your own head and hers if at this moment you show these. I know not from what quarter the report originates. You accused *me*, and falsely; but if you could hear all that is said at this moment, you would believe one who, though your enemy, though for ever alienated from you, though resolved never more, while she lives, to see or speak to or forgive you, yet would perhaps die to save you".[3]

He did not answer. "Lord Byron never once wrote to me—and always spoke of me with contempt". . . . When she found herself so despised, she grew quite ungovernable in her violence. One of her multitudinous pages was at that time in favour; she liked to play ball with him in the dining-room. But he, "a little *espiègle*'

[1] *L. and J.* ii. App. iii. p. 449.

[2] Or, as seems to me far more likely, the *Stanzas to Augusta*, then written, but not then published.

[3] *L. and J.* ii. App. iii. p. 450.

(as she described him !), "would throw detonating squibs into the fire. Lord Melbourne always scolded me for this, and I the boy. One day I was playing ball with him; he threw a squib into the fire. I threw the ball at his head, it hit him on the temple, and he bled. He cried out, 'Oh, my lady, you have killed me'. Out of my senses I rushed into the hall and screamed, 'Oh, God, I have murdered the page!' Servants and people in the street caught the sound, and it was soon spread about. William Lamb would live with me no longer. His family insisted on a separation. While instruments were drawing up, in one month I wrote and sent *Glenarvon* to the press. . . . When printed, I sent it to my husband, who was delighted with it, and we became united just as the world thought we were parted for ever".

Urged by his family, Lamb *had* consented to take the necessary steps for separation. Caroline, in the subdued and pensive mood that often followed her "accidents" (as the Duke of Wellington called them), received the chastisement mildly. All was prepared; the deed lay, awaiting signature, in the library. Lamb went up to her room for the final interview. But he was away so long that his brother ventured to go to the door and ask for him. He was invited to enter—"and found Lady Caroline seated by her husband's side, feeding him with tiny transparent scraps of bread and butter". . . . "She had had him to herself for one half-hour", remarks a chronicler; and no separation was arranged between Calantha and Avondale until 1825.

If William Lamb was really, as she said, delighted with *Glenarvon*, he is the only one of its readers that ever has been. If it were not for the biographical interest, no one could get through it at all. But of course it had a huge success, and not only in England but on

the Continent. In the year of its publication, it was given a forty-page notice in the *Bibliothèque Universelle*; in 1819 a translation was published in Paris, and a second edition of this was called for in 1824. . . . She said that she wrote it in a month, that when the copyist arrived to prepare it for the press she received him in a page's habit, and that he was incredulous that a boy should have written "such a thing". She wrote to Murray, four months after it appeared,[1] "Have you ever heard what *he* said of *Glenarvon*? I burn to know".

Here are some of the things he said. In July, to Murray, from the Villa Diodati at Geneva: "Of *Glenarvon* Mme de Staël told me (ten days ago, at Coppet) marvellous and grievous things; but I have seen nothing of it but the Motto, which promises amiably". He must have seen, then, a copy of the second edition, for it was to that edition that the *Corsair* lines were prefixed:

> "He left a name to all succeeding times,
> Link'd with one virtue and a thousand crimes"—

and his allusion to these lines is explicit.[2] He proceeds: "The generous moment selected for the publication is probably its kindest accompaniment, and, sooth to say, the time was well chosen. I have not even a guess at the contents . . . and I know but one thing which a woman can say to the purpose on such occasions, and that she might as well for her own sake keep to herself". He quoted to Rogers a filthy line from Pope about "furious Sappho"; but it was Moore who got

[1] It was published in May 1816, and her letter to Murray is endorsed (not dated) September 1816. She had had a copy splendidly bound for Byron, with his coronet and initials on the cover, and a key to the characters in her own handwriting. But it was never sent to him. "Glenarvon" was of course Byron himself. "Lady Mandeville" was Lady Oxford.

[2] Moore, p. 309.

the immortal reference. "As for the likeness, the picture can't be good—*I did not sit long enough*".[1] Later, he was more violent. Writing to Murray from Venice in April 1817, he speaks of a review in the Venice papers of "C. Lamb's" *Glenarvon*, "whom may it please the beneficent Giver of all Good to damn in the next world! as she has damned herself in this". Finally, in August of the same year, he tells how he was asked to sanction the publication of an Italian version, and informed the Censor that he "did not recognise the slightest relation between that book and myself". The translation was accordingly going forward; "you may say this, with my compliments to the author". Evidently it stung her, for on September 17 he writes to Murray: "I have received your enclosed letter from Lady Caroline Lamb, and am truly sorry (as she will one day be) that she is capable of writing such a letter; poor thing! it is a great pity".[2]

Her whole life was "a great pity". The most indulgent of us can say no more; the least indulgent, no less. *Had* she helped to spread the reports about Byron and Mrs. Leigh at the time of the separation—reports which are to make too large a part of our future reading? She denied it, as we have seen; but are we able to believe her? It is the "type" once more. Some must say everything; they have the vanity of suffering, as others have the pride. When Caroline Lamb heard whisperings about the man who had been hers, she could not sit and listen, but must whisper too. "Yes: I have heard him say terrible things about such relationships; I have heard him defend them". . . . It is the dramatic instinct—the melodramatic, say! And then, once off the stage, can we not see how that betrayal seems to them a thing incredible? "I did not say it;

[1] Moore, p. 330. [2] *L. and J.* iv. 271.

I could not have said it!" They could not; but they did. So it was with Caroline Lamb; yet when Byron heard that she had "said it"—had gossipped of the confidences of her lover, those strange, undreamed-of confidences that are part of every passion . . . we may not wonder that he condemned her, cursed her, without reprieve and without pity. I do not often defend Byron where a woman is concerned; here I can do nothing else. If she is to be pardoned for the errors that were implicit in her being, so must he be pardoned for his.

In 1819 she wrote to a friend, after recovering from a dangerous illness: "I believe, in truth, I died. . . . I seem to have buried my sins, grief, melancholy, and to have come out like a newborn babe . . . and never mean to answer any questions later than the 15th of this month, that being the day of the new Lady Caroline's birth; and I hate the old one". Her correspondence with William Godwin began in that year; her letters to him are the most touching she ever wrote, except that poignant one to Medwin. "I am like the wreck of a little boat . . . a little gay merry boat which perhaps stranded itself at Vauxhall or London Bridge". This was in 1821; again, in 1823, she wrote to Godwin: "I have been, as you said I might be, calm and perfectly well, and tolerably happy. . . . *I want you to tell me how to go on.* . . . There is no particular reason why I should exist; it conduces to no one's happiness. . . . Every one as usual is kind to me—I want for nothing this earth can offer but self-control".

Striving for this, hoping, praying to be "calm", she was living down at Brocket in 1824. In March she was taken very ill; two nurses sat up with her. "In

the middle of the night, I fancied I saw Lord Byron—I screamed, jumped out of bed, and desired them to save me from him. He looked horrible, and ground his teeth at me; he did not speak. . . . I felt convinced I was to die. . . . I had not dreamed of him since we had parted. . . . I told William, my brother, and Murray at the time. Judge what my horror was, as well as grief, when, long after,[1] the news came of his death. It was conveyed to me in two or three words: 'Caroline, behave properly, I know it will shock you—Lord Byron is dead'. This letter I received when laughing at Brocket Hall".[2]

She fell ill of a fever, "from which I never yet have recovered";[3] but on July 12, she was pronounced to be well enough to go out driving in an open carriage. Her husband rode on before her, and at the turnpike gate he met a funeral procession. "Whose is it?" he inquired.

They told him, "Lord Byron's".

It passed her carriage. . . .

"I of course was not told, but as I kept continually asking where and when he was to be buried . . . I heard it too soon, and it made me very ill again". But not instantly did she succumb, though she heard so "soon" that she wrote on July 13 to Murray and said, "Lord Byron's hearse came by our gates *yesterday*". Then she was struck down again by the illness from which she had barely recovered, and for a time "lay as one who had been stunned".

I am very sorry I ever said one unkind word against him. So she wrote to Murray on the day after that

[1] Byron died on April 19, 1824. His death was not known in England until May 14.

[2] *L. and J.* ii. App. iii. p. 454.

[3] The extract is from her letter to Medwin, which was probably written in November 1824.

meeting which has placed her story among those that can never be forgotten. It was the third key-note, as it were, of the sad, wild episode. *Mad, bad, and dangerous to know. That beautiful pale face is my fate. I am very sorry I ever said one unkind word against him*—each as true as it is poignant.

And so, his story being ended, hers might well be thought to have ended too. But there are further pages in that tattered book, and one of these must needs be glanced at here. It is like some child's travesty of a great stage-scene ; and in the very year of his death it happened—that affair of hers with the pseudo-Byron of our literature, the feeble, flashy imitation of the Great Romantic, known at first as Edward Bulwer Lytton! Nothing in her confused and miserable destiny is more disconcerting than this ludicrous repercussion of the past.

After Byron's death, her waywardness reached at length the bounds of even William Lamb's toleration, and when Medwin's book appeared in the autumn of 1824, the end of their life together soon showed itself as inevitable. She was not at first mischievous, nor malicious ; she was simply not to be controlled—nor endured. But soon the habits of insanity began to appear, and her nervous disarray was aggravated by the drinking of brandy mixed with laudanum —a fashionable perversity of the day. It is piteous to read the vivid accounts of her degeneration—the violence, the ugly slovenliness. For a time she was shut up in her rooms at Brocket, under the surveillance of two female keepers, and one day, in a fit of fury, she tore the doctor's watch from his hands and smashed it.

In January 1828, she died at Melbourne House, London, in William Lamb's arms.[1]

Since November her life had been despaired of, and the disease which killed her was of all diseases the most improbable—dropsy. The suffering and detestable discomforts of her state were borne by her with the utmost serenity and sweetness—she had reached, at last, poor soul, the calm for which she had so often prayed. "Her letters to her husband", says Torrens, "might have been written by one who never knew a troubled hour"; no repining, only one recurrence to the past. "What pleased me most of all was your dear letter saying you loved and forgave me". As the end approached, her great anxiety was that he might be with her at the last. He had not realised the imminent danger—he had delayed; not until January 23 did he leave Dublin, and she died on January 26. "Her feeble accents were of the old love only, the first great triumph of her life, and the last".

"A kinder or better heart", wrote her brother to Lady Morgan, "has never ceased to beat". "Never perhaps was there a human being who had less malevolence": her husband, writing with his own hand an obituary notice for the *Literary Gazette*, said that, among many other tender things. "All her errors hurt only herself". As we read those words, we ask ourselves: "Which had Caroline Lamb the more deeply injured—her lover, or her husband?"—and, with the answer, sound for the first time the depth of Byron's nothingness, where women were concerned, in love and understanding and generosity.

[1] She left to Lady Morgan a miniature of Byron—"*the original by Sanders*". Was it the very one that she had obtained by forgery all those fifteen years ago? . . . After Lady Morgan's death it was sold with other pictures at Christie's.

CHAPTER XIII

LOVE AND POETRY—1812-1814

Byron's view of Caroline Lamb: the Medwin "Conversation"—Lady Oxford—First "Sale" of Newstead: Mr. Claughton—Restlessness—*The Giaour*—Lady Adelaide Forbes—Lady Frances Wedderburn Webster—The Journal of 1813-14—Suspense—*The Bride of Abydos; The Corsair; Lara*—Abatement of the Byron Fever—A disingenuous saying

WHAT was Byron's view of the case? We have hints in the letters, always too communicative on such subjects; and we have the "conversation" with Medwin, which wrung from Caroline the appeal already given to my readers. Medwin's response—the complete suppression of the interview in the next edition of his book—seems to me a proof of his good faith. Byron knew that he was to be Boswellised; and so each talk with Medwin served an alternative purpose—either to add a further spell to the Legend, or to set the hero of it in that pose which seemed at the hour most interesting. But whichever purpose directed his confidence about Caroline Lamb proved ineffectual. *That* was a stupid, as well as a graceless, mistake; for if he wished to hold her up to contumely, he would more effectively have achieved it by showing his own behaviour as redeemed by some sincerity. But he simply did not understand that. To him, it was a *panache* not to have loved at all,

yet to have taken. It was the view of many another man in his day (in all days, it may be!); but since to Byron much of greatness in many things was given, so something of greatness in other things is required. Less than the lesser ones can he be pardoned — for that matter, indeed, few of the lesser ones have needed, in this regard, anything like so much indulgence. Others have done, but few have spoken and written, as he did — with so little of dignity, mercy, or comprehension.

Let us read, however, what he said to Medwin in 1821–22 — remembering, that justice may be done, all that had happened in the meantime to embitter him against her: *Glenarvon*, and the rumours to which she too probably had contributed.

"About this period" (1812–14) "I became *un homme à bonnes fortunes*, and had what one calls a serious liaison. The lady had scarcely any personal attractions. Her figure, though genteel, was too thin to be good, and wanted that roundness which elegance and grace would vainly supply. She was, however, young, and of the first connexions. *Au reste*, she possessed an infinite vivacity of mind, and an imagination heated by novel-reading. She was married, but *de convenance*; no couple could be more fashionably indifferent to, or independent of, one another than she and her husband. It was at this time that we *happened*[1] to be thrown much together. She had never been in love—at least where the affections are concerned—and was perhaps made without a heart, as many of the sex are; but her head more than supplied the deficiency.

"*I was soon congratulated by my friends* on the conquest I had made, and did my utmost to show that I was not insensible to the partiality I could not but perceive. *I made every effort to be in love, expressed as*

[1] Italics for English words are mine throughout this extract.

much ardour as I could muster, and kept feeding the flame with a constant supply of billets-doux and amatory verses. . . . I am easily governed by women; she acquired an ascendancy from which it was not easy to free myself. I submitted long to the thraldom, for I hate 'scenes', and am habitually indolent, but I was forced to snap the knot rather rudely at last. Like all lovers, we had had several quarrels before the final rupture. *We were reconciled on one occasion in a somewhat singular manner, without a word of verbal explanation. She will not have forgotten it.* . . . Even during our intimacy, I was not at all constant to this fair one, and she suspected as much. In order to detect my intrigues, she watched me, and earthed a lady into my lodgings—and came herself, terrier-like, in the disguise of a carman. . . . Imagine the scene; it was worthy of Faublas!

"Her after-conduct was unaccountable madness—a combination of spite and jealousy." He gives a version —not different from her own—of the Heathcote ball scene, and adds, "Soon after, she promised young X—— . . . if he would call me out. Yet can any one believe that after all this . . . she should call at my rooms? I was from home; but, finding *Vathek* on the table, she wrote in the first page 'Remember me!' . . . Yes, I had cause to remember her, and in the irritability of the moment, wrote beneath the words the following stanzas". With the *Remember Me* stanzas, already given,[1] the "conversation" ends.

I imagine that, with every allowance made for anger, there can be but one opinion of this confidence.

All Byron's actions at the time correspond with it. In the late summer of 1812—first year of his intrigue with Caroline—he proposed to, and was rejected by, her

[1] See page 230, note.

cousin by marriage, Anna Isabella Milbanke, whom he afterwards married. In September, after Caroline's departure for Ireland and his strange letter of farewell, he left London for Cheltenham. There he saw much of Lady Oxford, and with her he "formed", as he told Medwin, "a liaison that continued without interruption for eight months. She told me she was never in love until she was thirty; and I thought myself so with her when she was forty. I never felt a stronger passion, which she returned with equal ardour".

It is remarkable that almost alone of his conquests, Lady Oxford is referred to with gratitude. The Woman of Thirty—who is usually, of course, she of forty—may ponder this and exult. "A woman", he proclaimed to Lady Blessington (who must have listened with amusement), "is only grateful for her *first* and *last* conquest. The first of poor dear Lady Oxford's was achieved before I entered on this world of care; but the *last*, I do flatter myself, was reserved for me, and a *bonne bouche* it was". She was the wife of the fifth Earl of Oxford, and the daughter of a clergyman.[1] Married in 1794—"sacrificed", said Byron, "almost before she was a woman, to one whose body and mind were equally contemptible in the scale of creation"—she was the mother of several children[2] "who were perfect angels . . . and to whom the law gave him" [Lord Oxford] "the right

[1] The Rev. James Scott, Vicar of Itchin, Hants.

[2] In *Astarte*, Lord Lovelace tells us that these were called "The Harleian Miscellany". One of them was Lady Charlotte Harley, to whom, under the name of Ianthe, the introductory lines to *Childe Harold* (first published in the seventh edition of February 1814) were written in the autumn of 1812, when she was eleven years old.

"Love's image upon earth, without his wing".

Her portrait was painted by Westall, at Byron's request. She married, in 1820, Captain Anthony Bacon, afterwards Brigadier-General, and died in 1880.

THE COUNTESS OF OXFORD

FROM THE PAINTING BY JOHN HOPPNER, R.A., IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY

to be called father". Horne Tooke thought her the most brilliant Englishwoman of her day, and she was a great "collector" of poets and wits. Shelley was one of those whom she most desired to humanise, as she said; but he escaped her snares. They were widespread, and not cruel; "she was full of affectionate kindness to those she loved, whether as friends or as lovers. . . . Her failings", said Uvedale Price, writing to Rogers just after her death, "were in no small degree the effect of circumstance; her amiable qualities all her own". She was unusually lovely, as her picture by Hoppner in the National Portrait Gallery clearly shows. When Byron met her, she "resembled a landscape by Claude Lorraine, with a setting sun, her beauties enhanced by the knowledge that they were shedding their last dying beams, which threw a radiance round". He adds that "the autumn of a beauty like hers is preferable to the spring in others".

Certainly *he* was among her thralls. "I had great difficulty in breaking with her, even when I knew she was inconstant to me". Two short poems published in the seventh edition of *Childe Harold* (February 1814), "Thou art not false, but thou art fickle"; and, "On being asked what was the origin of Love",[1] may be taken as celebrating this affair and her "inconstancy"—which, by the way, does not chime with his remark to Lady Blessington that he believed he was the last of her conquests. Hobhouse had met her in London before the Cheltenham sojourn; and the comment in his Journal is illuminating. "Dined at Lord Oxford's. Lady O. most uncommon in her talk, and licentious—uncommonly civil". We have the profligate, but

[1] This was inscribed "To Ianthe", but the little Lady Charlotte Harley was, we may guess, the merely ostensible object of verses which her mother was sure to read.

delightful, great lady there to the life. She next appears in his chronicles on January 12, 1813. "Got a picture of Lady Oxford from Mrs. Mee. Lord Byron's money for it".

After Byron's stay in Cheltenham, he went on a visit to her and her husband (October 1812) at Eywood, Presteigne, Hereford, and remained until the middle of November. According to the *Glenarvon* date, it was at this time that the insulting letter to Caroline Lamb, sealed with Lady Oxford's coronet and initials, was written;[1] and it was on a second visit, in January 1813, that he told Murray of the forgery for the miniature. In February, Hodgson was told that he had taken Kinsham Court (a dower-house of the Harley family), so as to be near the Oxfords; and an explanation of this plan followed as a matter of course. "I cannot answer for the future, but the past is pretty secure; and in it I can number the last two months as worthy of the gods in Lucretius". The classical allusion was mere plagiarism from the lady herself. She had said to him: "Have we not passed our last month like the gods in Lucretius?" In the Journal of 1813, where he records this, he adds, "And so we had. She is an adept in the text of the original[2] (which I like too); and when that booby Bus.[3] sent his translating prospectus, she subscribed. But, the devil prompting him to add a specimen, she transmitted him a subsequent answer, saying that, 'after perusing it, her conscience would not permit her to allow her name to remain on the list of subscribblers'". We perceive that Lady Oxford was a Blue, as indeed were nearly all Byron's reputable

[1] But see Chapter XII.

[2] "The passage in Lucretius probably is *De Rerum Naturâ*, i. 57–62" (*L. and J.* ii. note to p. 325).

[3] Dr. Thomas Busby, musical composer, brought out a translation of Lucretius in 1813.

loves. He who railed perpetually against learning in women, was only once attracted by an "ignoramus". That is of a piece with his uncertainty of pose in other social matters, the pusillanimity which made Caroline Lamb say that *he was ashamed to be in love with her because she was not beautiful*—"an expression", remarks Galt, "at once curious and just, evincing a shrewd perception of the springs of his Lordship's conduct".

His life at this period was a sad mixture of Olympian blisses and very mundane financial embarrassments. In the early autumn of 1812, he had found himself obliged to put up Newstead Abbey for auction. Only £90,000 was bid, and the property was withdrawn; but in September, a private purchaser appeared in the person of a Mr. Claughton, who agreed to the price of £140,000. On September 28, Byron wrote to William Bankes of this piece of luck—for it *was* that melancholy kind of luck to which necessity is sole sponsor; he hinted at Rochdale hopes as well. But by October 18, apprehension was again hovering. "Is not Claughton's delay very strange?" he inquires of Hanson; and "What is to be done with Dearden?"—the lessee of the Rochdale coal-pits. It was the interest on his minority loans which was crippling him, as it continued to do until 1817; for, in the event, it was found for the hundredth time that nothing could be done with Dearden, and Claughton gradually emerged in his true character as a too-sanguine acquirer of great estates for which he could not find the purchase-money. Not till many months afterwards, not indeed until late in 1814, was the final arrangement made: Claughton, unable to complete purchase, forfeited £25,000 on the contract.

"It cost me more than words to part with it", Byron

wrote in the November of 1813, thinking still that he *had* parted with it. The dual trouble was depressing in the extreme; his Journal at this time is black with every word of gloom. . . . For long he had been desperately restless. To leave England "for ever" (it was always for ever, until it *was* for ever, and then only did he not believe it was!) had become the sole desire of his mind, and in the early days of resolve, of his heart as well, for at first it was with Lady Oxford that he planned to go. But that project fell through, resolutely though it was conceived, and over and over again announced. "My intention cannot be altered"; "I cannot act otherwise . . . with or without [money] I must go"; "I must be ready in April at whatever risk, whatever loss"; "Here no power on earth shall make me remain six weeks longer" (on March 6, 1813). Debts and passion were equal factors: "everything I have done to extricate myself has been useless"—and he was really economising; he had sold his books and horses, dismissed his groom . . . April had to be abandoned; June became the fixed month. But when June arrived, he was still in England—either in London, or at Salthill, near Maidenhead, probably with Lady Oxford, for the Post Office at Salthill was his only address; but "still as determined as I have been for the last six months" on going abroad "at all hazards, all losses". As far as going with the enchantress was concerned, hope died ere June was far advanced. He went to Portsmouth with her, to "see her off", on June 13; and on July 8, wrote to Moore from Bennet Street, St. James's (his London rooms), to say, "The Oxfords have sailed almost a fortnight". . . . So ended the Lucretian blisses.

Still he wanted to get away. Everything was tried, a companion was found in Mr. Dudley Ward (afterwards fourth Earl of Dudley), one of the most

delightful men of his time; but obstacles of every kind interposed, and, in a word, Byron never left England even for a day until, in 1816, he left it for ever.

How had the poesy progressed? Until 1813 he did nothing worth speaking of. At Cheltenham he wrote the entirely worthless *Waltz*, which was published anonymously in the spring of 1813; and the still more uninteresting Address for the Opening of Drury Lane Theatre on October 10, 1812, after the fire of 1809. The latter task was undertaken at Lord Holland's special request. A prize of twenty guineas had been offered for an address; one hundred and twelve aspirants had entered, but no effort was considered worthy of the prize.[1] Lord Holland, who was one of the Committee of Selection, then asked Byron to write an address. He had not competed, though at first he had meant to do so; he agreed to write one now, and spent an infinity of pains and enthusiasm on the thing. From Cheltenham there came to Lord Holland no fewer than thirteen letters, sometimes two in a day, and all filled with corrections and alternative readings. "I am almost ashamed", wrote the kindly peer to Rogers, "of having induced Lord Byron to write on so ungrateful a theme . . . he . . . took so much pains, corrected so good-humouredly. . . . You cannot imagine how I grew to like Lord Byron in my critical intercourse with him". The Address, spoken by Elliston (Charles Lamb's "joyousest of once embodied spirits"), was a failure, and the peculiar circumstances in which it was written

[1] This competition and its abortive result produced the famous *Rejected Addresses* by James and Horace Smith—a volume of brilliant parodies of all the notable poets of the day. That on Byron, called "Cui Bono?" was the source of infinite delight to him: he said the second and third stanzas were "just what he could have wished to write on a similar subject".

produced much irritation among the unsuccessful competitors.

In the earliest days of the Cheltenham sojourn, however, Byron had written to Murray: "What will you give *me* or *mine* for a poem of six cantos (*when* complete—*no* rhyme, *no* recompense) as like the last two as I can make them? I have some ideas which one day may be embodied, and till winter I shall have much leisure". His leisure was eaten up until October by the troublesome Address; moreover, the love-affair with Lady Oxford idled him a good deal. But at last he spurred himself to effort, and in May sent Murray "a corrected, and, I hope, amended copy of the lines for the 'fragment' already sent this evening". The fragment was the first draft, containing 407 lines, of *The Giaour*. In the Journal for that year he affirmed that it was "a week's" work; but it is only to these first four hundred lines that that can be said to apply. The poem, either in the course of printing, or in the successive editions, expanded from 407 to 1334 lines.

Byron's feeling about it was mingled pride and annoyance. He was amazed at his facility, but somewhat irritated by its fragmentary form. "I have, but with some difficulty, *not* added any more to this snake of a poem, which has been lengthening its rattles every month". In sending Moore a copy of the fifth edition he wrote: "I send you . . . that awful pamphlet, *The Giaour* . . . you will perceive that I have added much in quantity". He had added close on two hundred lines. Nor was that the end, for on September 29, in preparation for the seventh edition (which presented the poem in its final shape), there is a note to Murray: "Pray suspend the *proöfs*, for I am bitten again, and have quantities for other parts of *The Giaour*".

These technical details would be better omitted if

they were not so highly characteristic of Byron's method. On the passage beginning

"Clime of the unforgotten brave!"

and consisting of 138 lines, there is a note, quoted by Mr. Ernest Coleridge, from the edition of 1837.[1] "From hence to the conclusion of the paragraph, the MS. is written in a hurried and almost illegible hand, as if these splendid lines had been poured forth in one continuous burst of poetic feeling, which would hardly allow time for the pen to follow the imagination".

The idea of a poem in fragments had been suggested to Byron by Rogers's *Columbus*, which appeared in 1812; and the method certainly indulged to the full his impatience of "those mechanical difficulties which, in a regular narrative, embarrass, if not chill, the poet, leaving it to the imagination of his readers to fill up the intervals between those abrupt bursts of passion in which his chief power lay".[2] He could dash off a purple passage, and dispatch it to Murray with a note: "I have not yet fixed the place of insertion for the following lines, but will when I see you—as I have no copy". But, as with Balzac, it was when the proofs came that his serious work began. He would touch and retouch, finding fresher epithets, more musical lines, a sharper emphasis—and finding also, to his infinite anger and our infinite amusement, those unbelievable blunders of the printer over which every writer has in his turn blinked and fulminated. "There is an ingenuity in his blunders peculiar to himself", wrote Byron, convinced, like each new sufferer, that the ingenuity of his peculiar "blockhead" *was*

[1] This was a "Collected Edition" of the *Poems*, "with all the notes by Sir Walter Scott".

[2] Moore, p. 178.

peculiar. It was with *The Giaour* that he first passed the ordeal by proof-sheets; for Dallas had seen the Satire and *Childe Harold* through the press. He bore it worse than most of us. Galley-proofs were a surprise, almost an insult: "a mile-long, ballad-singing sheet. . . . I can't read them distinctly"; and soon another spectre barred his path. "Do you know anybody who can stop—I mean *point*—commas, and so forth; for I am, I hear, a sad hand at your punctuation". Hodgson came to the rescue; but the novelty of the terror had left traces on Byron's nerves. In a letter enclosing revise "*pointed*" by the friend in need, he added a postscript: "Do attend to the punctuation; I can't, for I don't know a comma—at least, where to place one".

The anguish temporarily ceased on June 5, 1813, when *The Giaour* made its first appearance: a "fragment" of no more than 685 lines. It pleased sufficiently in this guise for a second edition to be demanded before the end of the month. This was swelled by 131 lines, among them perhaps the most renowned of all Byron's purple passages:

"He who hath bent him o'er the dead"—

that strange, slipshod loveliness, where "He" never fulfils his destiny as the subject of the opening phrase. Bent o'er the dead, he remains immovable to the end of time. It is another instance of the Spell: that transfixed form, who for so long was never seen to be transfixed! As an instance of his retouching, none seems to me more striking—though Moore selects a long passage[1]—than the single line:

"Such moment *pours* the grief of years,"

[1] That beginning "Fair clime! where every season smiles"—lines 7 to 20 (*Poems*, ii. 86).

which in the two first editions had the variants:

"Such moment *holds a thousand years*"—

and

"Such moment *proves* the grief of years"—

both entirely uninteresting, while the final rendering is made, by a single word, one of the most poignant of his isolated beauties. In the seventh edition there stood for the first time the lovely quatrain:

"She was a form of life and light,
That, seen, became a part of sight,
And rose, where'er I turned mine eye,
The Morning-Star of Memory!"

These lines, and the long passage beginning:

"Yes, Love indeed is light from heaven"

—the hundred and twenty-six lines which "Hodgson liked", and which the world has followed him in liking—were, it has been supposed, the expression of his love for Lady Frances Wedderburn Webster.

"My good, my guilt, my weal, my woe,
My hope on high, my all below.
Earth holds no other like to thee,
Or, if it doth, in vain for me . . ."

How many a lover has murmured those syllables to "the cherished madness of his heart", and how many an one will still murmur them, whether he be a reader of Byron or not! For they are, like so much else that he wrote, the instinctive language of humanity; and in deep emotion, that is the language which humanity uses. How "natural", for example, is the *arrière-pensée*: "Or, if it doth, in vain for me"—that anti-climax which, to a lover's brooding soul, will seem the very climax of his answer to the woman's eternal question.

The tragic narrative of this poem became of course a

theme for gossip. We have seen, in Chapter IX., that Byron called Lord Sligo to his rescue, when "a different story was circulated by some gentlewomen of our acquaintance". The letter thus obtained left the mystery unsolved, but it is clear from an entry in Byron's Journal of 1813 that some poignant memory had informed the poem. "*12, midnight.*—Here are two confounded proofs from the printer. I have looked at the one, but for the soul of me, I can't look over that *Giaour* again—at least just now and at this hour—and yet there is no moon". . . . In Chapter IX. I have put the various theories together; we shall get no further by any cudgelling of the brains or of the Journal.

His success was beyond doubt. Edition crowded on edition, and the great Reviews were kind; the *Edinburgh's* article upon it came second in the summer number: "so very mild and sentimental", said Byron, "that it must be written by Jeffrey *in love*".[1]

All this time a sort of correspondence with Caroline Lamb was kept up. She was mentioned to Murray as one of those to whom the earliest copies of *The Giaour* were to be sent; but there was no longer any pretence at love on Byron's side. Even Lady Oxford was hardly gone before a new charmer began to figure in the letters to Moore. This time it was from a matrimonial point of view. On July 13: "Do you know, Moore, I am amazingly inclined—remember I say but *inclined*—to be seriously enamoured of Lady Adelaide Forbes". Lady Adelaide's father was the sixth Earl of Granard, and her mother a daughter of the first Earl of Moira. Lord Moira was Moore's

[1] It was written by Jeffrey, and Jeffrey *was* in love; he had just "gone to America to marry some fair one", with whom he had long been "*éperdûment amoureux*".

"patron", and political sympathies brought the Irish poet into close relation with Lord Granard as well. The daughter was a noted beauty. When, in 1817, Byron visited Rome, he wrote to Moore: "The Apollo Belvedere is the image of Lady Adelaide Forbes — I think I never saw such a likeness". Moore, whom Byron treated as the match-maker in this very transient affair, was reluctant to assume the part. He confesses that he smiled upon his friend's suit—such as it was—but adds, "if the lady could have consented to undertake the perilous — but still possible and glorious — achievement of attracting Byron to virtue, I own that, sanguinely as in theory I might have looked to the result, I should have seen not without trembling the happiness of one whom I had known and valued from her childhood risked in the experiment".

In a fortnight Byron perceived that he was making no way. "I am not well-versed enough in the ways of single woman to make much matrimonial progress". It was directly after the scene with Caroline at Lady Heathcote's ball that he had begun the wooing; and though Moore affirms that Lady Adelaide herself never suspected Byron of any serious purpose, it is evident that her sister, Lady Rancliffe, saw and disapproved. "Had Lady [Rancliffe?] appeared to wish it—or even *not* to oppose it—I would" (wrote Byron on May 31, 1814) "have gone on, and very possibly married (that is, *if* the other had been equally accordant) with the indifference which has 'frozen over' the Black Sea of almost all my passions. It is that very indifference which makes me so uncertain and apparently capricious. . . . In almost all cases, opposition is a stimulus. In mine, it is not; if a straw were in my way, I could not stoop to pick it up".

Yet in the interval between his first announcement

of admiration for Lady Adelaide[1] and this new setting of the Marble Heart theme, there had run the whole course of his romantic passion for Lady Frances Wedderburn Webster. In that business there were obstacles enough; and the evidence of his Journal and letters is convincing proof that he was not too indifferent to remove them.[2]

Lady Frances Annesley was a daughter of the first Earl of Mountnorris and eighth Viscount Valentia; and Byron had long been intimate with her husband, whom she married in 1810—from the schoolroom, it would seem, for in 1819 she was but twenty-six.[3] Byron did not make her acquaintance until September 1813. There is a note, not to her but to her husband, in August, consenting to be godfather to an expected baby. It was to be called after him if a boy: "If it is a *girl*, why not also? Georgina, or even *Byron*, will make a classical name for a spinster".[4] From September 15 to 24, he stayed for the first time with the Websters, at Aston Hall, Rotherham, Yorkshire. In a letter to Moore after he had left, he refers to the

[1] Lady Adelaide, who in 1813 was twenty-four, never married. She died at Dresden, in 1858.

[2] In 1821, giving Murray "a hint or two" about collecting his letters, he says: "As to those to other correspondents (female, etc.), there are plenty scattered about in the world . . . most of them have kept them—I hear at least that Ly. O. and F. W. W. have kept theirs; but these letters are of course inaccessible (and perhaps not desirable)". Elsewhere, he refers to Lady F. W. W. as one of "my loves"—all of whom "make a point of calling on" Augusta Leigh (*L. and J.* v. 379; 371).

[3] Moore met her at a county ball in that year, and they "spoke much of Byron". He adds: "She must have been very pretty when she had more of the freshness of youth, though she is still but five or six and twenty, but she looks faded already" (*Journals*, etc. ii. 249).

[4] It was a boy—the eldest son—and was christened Byron Wedderburn. He died young, and when Byron was told, he "almost chuckled with joy or irony", and said, "Well, I cautioned you, and told you that my name would damn almost any thing or creature" (MS. note by Wedderburn Webster, cited in *L. and J.* ii. 259).

visit in his own peculiar manner. "I was a visitor in the same house which came to my sire as a residence with Lady Carmarthen (with whom he adulterated before his majority—by the by, remember *she* was not my mamma)—and they thrust me into an old room with a nauseous picture over the chimney . . . which, inheriting the family taste, I looked upon with great satisfaction. I stayed a week with the family, and behaved very well—though the lady of the house is young, and religious, and pretty, and the master is my particular friend. I felt no wish for anything but a poodle-dog, which they kindly gave me. Now for a man of my courses not even to have *coveted* is a sign of great amendment".

Moore may have smiled at the familiar pleasantries, but how much broader must his smile have become when from the pages there slipped a copy of verses! "Here's an impromptu for you by a person of quality, written last week, on being reproached for low spirits".

"When, from the heart where Sorrow sits,
Her dusky shadow mounts too high,
And o'er the changing aspect flits,
And clouds the brow, or fills the eye;
Heed not that gloom, which soon shall sink:
My Thoughts their dungeons know too well;
Back to my breast the Wanderers shrink,
And *droop* within their silent cell".

On September 30 he wrote to Webster, promising to return to Aston. Lady Frances had invited Augusta to stay at the same time, but Augusta did not go, and on November 8 she received a note from Byron to say that his "silence had been occasioned by a thousand things, with which *she* was not concerned". "It is not L^y^. C. nor O.; but perhaps you may *guess*, and if you do, do not tell. You do not know what mischief your being with me might have prevented . . . in the meantime

don't be alarmed. I am in *no immediate* peril".[1] These words and two or three other allusions point unmistakably to the fancied risk of a duel. On November 30 he wrote Moore a mysterious letter. "We were once very near neighbours[2] this autumn; and a good and bad neighbourhood it has proved to me. Suffice it to say, that your French quotation[3] was confoundedly to the purpose—though very unexpectedly pertinent, as you may imagine by what I *said* before, and by my silence since. However, 'Richard's himself again', and except all night and some part of the morning, I don't think very much about the matter". In the Journal for the same month (November) we find complaints of not hearing from "**". "Not a *word* from **. Have they set out from **? or has my last precious epistle fallen into the lion's jaws? If so—and this silence looks suspicious—I must clap on my 'musty morion', and 'hold out my iron'. I am out of practice—but I won't begin again at Manton's[4] now. Besides, I would not return his shot". The suspense lasted until January 1814, for there is a letter to Moore on the 6th: "I have a confidence for you—a perplexing one to me, and, just at present, in a state of abeyance in itself". Here follow many asterisks,[5] and the text resumes with, "However, we shall see. In the meantime, you may amuse yourself with my suspense, and put all the justices of the peace in requisition, in case I come into your

[1] *L. and J.* ii. 277.

[2] Moore was at this time living at Mayfield Cottage, Ashbourne, Derbyshire.

[3] Moore had written: "I should say with old Fontenelle, *Si je recommençais ma carrière, je ferais tout ce que j'ai fait*".

[4] "Joe" Manton, the renowned gunsmith, had a shooting-gallery in Davies Street, to which the Dandies, and especially Byron, much resorted. Byron boasted to Manton that he considered himself the best shot in London. Manton differed from him.

[5] Moore, with his maddening discretion, omits even the asterisks.

county with 'hackbut bent'. Seriously, whether I am to hear from her or him, it is a *pause* which I shall fill up with as few thoughts of my own as I can borrow from other people. Anything is better than stagnation; and now, in the interregnum of my autumn *and a strange summer adventure, which I don't like to think of*[1] . . . the antithetical state of my lucubrations makes me alive. . . . *P.S.*—Of course you will keep my secret, and don't even talk in your sleep of it. Happen what may, your dedication[2] is ensured, being already written; and I shall copy it out fair to-night, in case business or amusement—*Amant alterna Camœnæ*". . . . But by the 8th the danger had vanished. "The devil, who ought to be civil on such occasions, proved so, and took my letter to the right place".

There is no doubt that many of the references in the letters and the Journal are to Lady Frances. The lines:

> "Remember him, whom Passion's power
> Severely—deeply—vainly proved:
> Remember thou that dangerous hour,
> When neither fell—though both were loved".[3]

—are the raw material, as it were, of the two sonnets "To Genevra", which unquestionably she inspired, if we can use the word "inspired" of such very dismal failures. He scorned the form: "I will never write another. They are the most puling, petrifying, stupidly platonic compositions". Certainly his are; they must be among the worst in any language. . . . That Genevra stands for Lady Frances—blue-eyed, dark-lashed, fair-haired, pale, "the soul of melancholy Gentleness"—is certain from the earlier names in *The Corsair*. The

[1] Italics mine. [2] The dedication of *The Corsair* to Moore.

[3] They were first published with the seventh edition of *Childe Harold* in 1814.

heroine was called first Francesca, then Genevra—finally Medora.

She was clearly, despite the duel-alarm, what he had at first declared her to be—"religious". If she yielded to him (in whatever degree) she was quickly seized with remorse; over the whole episode, indeed, there hangs a mist of melancholy. At the time it influenced, to the extent of actually altering, his work, for in *The Bride of Abydos* (which is its immediate flower, so to speak)[1] he strove for a wan, ethereal pathos very different in quality from the genuine Byronic gloom. In a measure he achieved it; the long rhapsody of the White Rose is charged with the hesitant, faint fragrance, lit with the "lonely lustre, meek and pale", which we may take to have been the atmosphere of Lady Frances. Precisely this note was struck at no other time; nor is it, in reality, his note. He knew this, and said to Moore, "Tenderness is not my forte". Moore said the same thing in different words: "To aim at vigour and strong feeling after *you* is hopeless—that region was made for Cæsar".

The Bride of Abydos was published on November 29 or 30, 1813: "my first *entire* composition of any length, (except the Satire, and be damned to it), for *The Giaour* is but a string of passages, and *Childe Harold* is, and I rather think always will be, unconcluded". . . . I care for it very little. The passages describing Zuleika, and the White Rose rhapsody, are the sole abodes of beauty; here and there a striking phrase emerges, though the best known of them all is a mere translation from Tacitus:[2]

"He makes a solitude, and calls it—peace!"

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[1] I retain this opinion even against the revelations of *Astarte* with respect to that poem—to be alluded to later.

[2] "*Solitudinem faciunt—pacim appellant*" (*Agricola*, cap. 30).

Among the others, I choose two brilliant examples of his keen, authentic observation—the passage where, after the murder of Selim, he speaks of the trampled beach, where one might see "*dashed* into the sand, The print of many a struggling hand"; and again, when Selim's body floats upon the water:

> "'That hand, whose motion is not life,
> Yet feebly seems to menace strife,
> Flung by the tossing tide on high,
> Then levelled with the wave'" . . .

the revocation of a scene actually beheld by him in the Dardanelles during the Albanian tour.[1]

But for the rest, this "first entire composition" seems to me one of the least successful of the Oriental tales. When narrative turns to dialogue, we are frequently reduced to laughter, as, for example, when the tyrannical Pasha says to Selim:

> "If thus Zuleika oft takes wing—
> Thou see'st yon bow—it hath a string!"

—which could hardly be beaten for absurdity in a Surrey-side theatre. In the dialogue between Selim and Zuleika (canto ii.) there are many passages of similar calibre.

But *The Bride* quickly ran through ten editions, and within a month of its appearance six thousand copies had been sold. Murray offered him for it, *The Giaour*, and some shorter poems, the sum of one thousand guineas; but Byron refused (the offer was made before *The Bride* was published) to allow anything to be formally arranged until Easter 1814, when Murray would "know whether he could afford it". When he did accept the money, he used it "for a friend".

[1] Galt, p. 144.

It will be convenient to discuss in this chapter two of the four remaining Eastern tales — namely, *The Corsair* and *Lara*, both published in 1814. In less than three months after the *Bride* "had blushed" upon the reading public, Byron, vividly in vein as he was, had begun "a devil of a long story . . . in the regular heroic measure". It was on December 18 that he sat down to the composition; by December 31, the fair copy of the first draft was ready — and on this occasion he was more definitely the improvisatore than ever. For not only was *The Corsair* written in three weeks, but it was hardly at all corrected or re-touched. He composed it at the rate of "two hundred lines a day". Together with the sixth edition of *The Bride of Abydos*, the seventh of *Childe Harold*, and the ninth of *The Giaour*, it was issued on February 1, 1814.

In two days there came from Murray (who had bitterly offended Byron by issuing a warning against over-writing—and very nearly lost *The Corsair* for his pains!) a letter of panting exultation, which "presents", says Mr. Ernest Coleridge, "a vivid picture of a great literary triumph".

"My Lord,—I have been unwilling to write until I had something to say. . . . I am most happy to tell you that your last poem *is*—what Mr. Southey's is *called*—a *Carmen Triumphale*. Never in my recollection has any work . . . excited such a ferment. . . . *I sold on the day of publication*—a thing perfectly unprecedented—*10,000 copies*. . . . You have no notion of the sensation which the publication has occasioned; and my only regret is that you were not present to witness it".

Byron was at Newstead—which was still dangling between him and the elusive Claughton—snowbound

with Augusta[1] Leigh, who was paying her first visit to the ancestral home. He was gratified by the news, "not the less so because it was unexpected", and while thanking Murray for wishing him in town, thought "that one's success is most felt at a distance". "I enjoy my solitary self-importance in an agreeable sulky way of my own".

The Corsair was one of the many "last appearances". He had announced this with a flourish in the dedicatory letter to Moore;[2] and he now developed the theme for Murray's benefit. "Our Finale has pleased and the Curtain drops gracefully. . . . I *was* and *am* quite in earnest in my prefatory promise not to intrude any more. . . . My rhyming propensity is quite gone, and I feel much as I did at Patras on recovering from my fever—weak, but in health, and only afraid of relapse. I do most fervently hope I never shall". (This is perhaps the most amusing place to record that by April 10, he *had* relapsed. "I have written an Ode on the Fall of Napoleon, which, if you like, I will copy out, and make you a present of. . . . You may show it to Mr. Gifford, and print it or not, as you please—it is of no consequence". If Murray did print it, it was to be anonymous; "but you may *say* as openly as you like that it is mine, and I can inscribe it to Mr. Hobhouse[3] from the *author*, which will mark it sufficiently".)

[1] On a tree with a double stem Byron in this year cut the two names, "Byron" and "Augusta". The English translator of Elze's Life tells us that the stem bearing the names (being threatened with decay) was removed in 1861 by Mr. Webb, who bought the estate in 1860 at the death of Colonel Wildman. That portion of the tree-trunk is preserved in a glass case at Newstead. The date cut by Byron is September 20, 1814. . . . At Mr. Webb's death, Newstead passed to his daughter, Lady Chermside, who died in 1910.

[2] *The Giaour* had been dedicated to Rogers, and *The Bride of Abydos* to Lord Holland.

[3] He did not inscribe it; and Hobhouse, in his Journal, has the delightful comment: "This I got off". A first edition of the Ode was issued on April 16, 1814; a second followed immediately. It was published anonymously, but there was no secret about the authorship.

The blazing success of *The Corsair* was due not entirely to its excellence. There were two contributory causes besides. One of these will presently be detailed; the other was the unmistakable self-portraiture in the hero, Conrad, who, with his development Lara, is the very Quintessence of Byronism. To say, as people of course did say, that Byron had really done the things which Conrad did, is actually to destroy the illusion. Again, as we saw a little differently with *Childe Harold*, the value of the self-portraiture consists in the fact that he was *not* his hero's facsimile. . . . This is to me an amazement in the writings about Byron. What does it mean, then, to be a great poet, if that poet must use the chapter and verse of mere fact for everything he describes? The reference of creative artists is precisely not to that, but to the chapter and verse of the transfiguring imagination. Thus to make acquaintance with these two melancholy personages is to know and see Byron as we could never have known and seen him otherwise. The traits which he assigns to them are those traits which set him dreaming. So, in such cases, he would have desired to act and be —and so, in such cases, he for the most part did not act nor be. The reticence of Conrad and Lara, for example—and the communicativeness of Byron! It is the same with even the externalities. We may well suppose that to the Byronic imagination, Byron's fairness of colouring seemed a defect, even a disaster —and so, Conrad and Lara have "sable locks." There are accuracies, of course; each has some feature unaltered from the apparent life:

> "Sunburnt his cheek, his forehead high and pale
> The sable curls in wild profusion veil;
> And oft perforce his rising lip reveals
> The haughtier thought it curbs, but scarce conceals.
> . . . . . .

His features' deepening lines and varying hue
At times attracted, yet perplexed the view;
As if within that murkiness of mind
Worked feelings fearful, and yet undefined.
. . . . . .
There was a laughing Devil in his sneer . . ."

It would be an amusing exercise to verify the authentic features in this "Portrait of a Gentleman, Byronic Period". To a woman who knew him well, Byron wrote the report of his identity with *The Corsair*;[1] and he records in his Journal that "she says she don't wonder, since 'Conrad is so like'. It is odd that one who knows me so thoroughly should tell me this to my face. However, if she don't know, nobody can".

Despite the Spell, we now find Conrad tedious. He is agreeable to look at, but there our liking for him ends; we feel that when he comes back from the last expedition—the disguise as a Dervish, the burning of the city of Seyd, the dread adventure with "Gulnare, the Homicide!"—it is no more than he deserves to find Medora dead. And when he disappears:

"His death yet dubious, deeds too widely known",

leaving

". . . a Corsair's name to other times,
Link'd with one virtue, and a thousand crimes"—

we are momentarily converted to the dictum of Ninon de Lenclos: "Love is a passion, not a virtue; and a passion does not turn into a virtue because it happens to last—it merely becomes a longer passion".

Lara was finished on June 14, in the same year (1814). There was long hesitation about publishing. Byron felt shy at the thought of "trespassing on public patience" again, after the protestations in the letter to

[1] Almost certainly, Augusta Leigh.

Moore. But Rogers, on June 27, sent him the MS. of a poem[1] to read; Byron "paid him in kind, or rather *un*kind", with "two cantos of darkness and dismay"—namely, the two cantos of which *Lara* consisted; and this exchange of unpublished works suggested a happy compromise. "Rogers and I", he wrote to Moore on July 8, "have almost coalesced into a joint invasion of the public".[2] Rogers, after the first plunge, began to vacillate, and though Murray advertised the Coalition on August 3, Byron told Moore that both authors were "still demurring and delaying and in a fuss". Murray, as Mr. Coleridge says, knew his man, and sure enough, on August 5 came the "ostensibly reluctant" word of command: "Out with *Lara*, since it must be". *How* well the publisher knew his man is shown by the fact that the coalition-volume had sold to the number of six thousand on August 6. Murray had done everything but actually deliver the copies before the magic word was spoken! . . . A week after publication Byron wrote to Moore: "Murray talks of divorcing Larry and Jacky. . . . Seriously, I don't care a cigar about it, and I don't see why Sam should". The divorce was quickly made, and at least four separate editions of *Lara* were published during the autumn of 1814.

Lara's identity with Conrad was admitted by the author. "The reader may probably regard it" [*Lara*] "as a sequel to *The Corsair*". Kaled, the mysterious page, stands for "Gulnare, the Homicide". (Caroline Lamb, reading the poem, may well, poor lady, have seen in the episode a reminiscence of her many escapades in this sort!) But Lara, though yielding

[1] *Jacqueline.*

[2] "Lord Byron afterwards proposed that I should make a third in this publication; but the honour was a perilous one, and I begged leave to decline it" (Moore, p. 257, note 2).

nothing to Conrad in gloom, contrives to be much more interesting. Doubtless, the change of scene from the East to England has something to do with this greater appeal; the gloomy man, pacing an ancestral English hall, comes home to us in a way that the far less ridiculous Conrad never does. But I think the real reason is that the peculiar absurdity of *Lara* has been for every one of us, at some time in our lives, our own absurdity. The poem finds us frequently murmuring, "It's I myself!"—and it leaves us with an awakened sense of exposure to ridicule. We laugh —and justly laugh—at the total lack of irony with which Lara is presented; yet in the last resort this adds a pang to the realisation of our kinship with him. It is almost a confession to quote the lines which best will illustrate my meaning. Take stanza 18 in canto i.;[1] take the immortal "Lord of himself —that heritage of woe"; take (to make a genuine clean breast of it!) the passage in stanza 19 of the same canto:

> "He had (if 'twere not nature's boon) an art
> Of fixing memory on another's heart . . .
> But they who saw him did not see in vain,
> And once beheld—would ask of him again.
> . . . . . .

[1] "There was in him a vital scorn of all:
As if the worst had fallen which could befall,
He stood a stranger in this breathing world,
An erring Spirit from another hurled;
A thing of dark imaginings . . .
. . . . . .
With more capacity for love than Earth
Bestows on most of mortal mould and birth,
His early dreams of good outstripped the truth,
And troubled Manhood followed baffled Youth . . .
. . . . . .
But haughty still, and loth himself to blame,
He called on Nature's self to share the shame".

None knew nor how, nor why, but he entwined
Himself perforce around the hearer's mind;
There he was stamped, in liking, or in hate,
If greeted once; . . .
You could not penetrate his soul, but found,
Despite your wonder, to your own he wound;
His presence haunted still, and from the breast
He forced an all unwilling interest:
Vain was the struggle in that mental net—
His spirit seemed to dare you to forget!"

Are there many of us to whom that dream has not seemed realisable—if once the ideal conditions could be found! . . . For Byron it *was* realised, and in a degree which, arrogant as he was, seemed to him almost incredible. This is one of the great paradoxes of his career, and of his character. He set the world ablaze, and knew that he had set it so—yet was convinced both that his vocation was not poetry, and that the world did not at all appreciate or understand him. Certainly it did not understand him; yet, with the woman who said that Conrad was "so like", it eagerly accepted him on his own terms. He spent the resources of his genius in vilifying himself, and then wondered that people frowned. Such a psychological problem as we find in *Lara* might well perplex the drawing-rooms:

"Too high for common selfishness, he could
At times resign his own for others' good,
But not in pity—not because he ought,
But in some strange perversity of thought,
That swayed him onward with a secret pride
To do what few or none would do beside;
And this same impulse would, in tempting time,
Mislead his spirit equally to crime;
So much he soared beyond, or sunk beneath,
The men with whom he felt condemned to breathe".[1]

It was true, and it was not true.[2] To those who

[1] Canto i. stanza 18.

[2] In one of Lady Byron's "Narratives" (*Astarte*), she says that he said of *Lara*, "'There's more in *that* than any of them,' shuddering and avoiding my eye. I said it had a stranger mysterious effect than any, and was 'like

met him in society, and found his "liveliness and unreserve" confronting them, instead of the gloom and almost inhuman reticence of his heroes (who yet were immutably identified with him), the puzzle may well have been given up as insoluble. Moore found, when they met in town during the spring of 1813, that already the Byron Fever was abated. Those who saw him often were learning the lesson; only strangers or casual acquaintances now believed that "the fierce gloom and sternness of his imaginary characters" was reflected from his own. . . . And yet, despite Moore's testimony to the external truth that it was not so reflected, the deeper, the essential truth is that it *was*. Somewhere in Byron, melancholy reigned supreme. Neither the gaiety nor the gloom was histrionic; one did not mask the other—both were frankly what they called themselves. There never was a more spontaneous poser—using "pose" in its true sense of poise. His spontaneity in this amounted to simplicity: that is why he puzzled, and continues to puzzle, the world. "The causes", he said (disingenuously), of his separation from his wife, "were too simple to be easily found out". We might use the remark to cover the whole of Byronism, and, so doing, impart to it a veracity which it does not, in the actual connection, possess.

the darkness in which one fears to behold spectres'. The remark struck him . . . at least I presume so from his singular commendation of it with the usual mysterious manner. He often said that *Lara* was the most metaphysical of his works" (pp. 116–117).

CHAPTER XIV

THE MAN'S MAN—1812–1814

Social glories—Introduction to the Prince Regent—Sir Walter Scott—Byron's beauty—*Venetia*—Affectations—His relation to the world—The Man's Man: his letters—Lack of literary jealousy—*Don Juan*—Hodgson and Webster contrasted—Mrs. Mule—The Prince Regent: "Fracas" at Carlton House—*Lines to a Lady Weeping*—Hysterics of the Press—The gloom of Byron's Journal—Byron as lover—His engagement

THROUGH his friendship with Moore, and the consequent widening of his social relations, Byron first became in the lesser, but not wholly ignoble, sense of the word, "civilised". It was odd that he should enter his natural spheres, both intellectual and social, by favour of the son of an obscure Irish tradesman—the old English Baron chaperoned, as it were, by little Tommy Moore; and his earlier friends regarded the paradoxical development with differing sensations. "This", writes the jealous and exacting Dallas, "was the trying moment of virtue, and no wonder it was shaken". "For some time", says Galt, "after the publication of *Childe Harold*, the noble author appeared to more advantage than I ever afterwards saw him". William Bankes, remote and touchy, continually nagged him in letters which Byron answered with extraordinary patience and gentleness; Hodgson and Hobhouse, more genial and more "worldly", accepted the new state of things with

amusement and interest. Hobhouse, for that matter, belonged to the same set, though his place in it was naturally less conspicuous. There was no one whom they did not meet, and for all whom they met, no matter how eagerly those were courted, Byron was the cynosure. "Glory darted thick upon him from all sides", continues Dallas; ". . . he was the wonder of greybeards, and the show of fashionable parties".

One of these, in the June of 1812, was so fashionable that the Prince Regent was among the earliest guests, and, noticing Byron, asked who he was. On being told, he at once sent and desired him to be presented. In connection with this social triumph — His Royal Highness was very gracious — a striking instance of how delightful Byron could be with men (for with men he *was* delightful) comes forth. The illustrious dialogue naturally turned upon poetry, and "after some sayings peculiarly pleasing from royal lips, as to my own attempts", the Prince referred to Walter Scott. About him he was so enthusiastic that a day or two afterwards, Byron called upon John Murray, "merely", wrote Murray to Scott, "to let off the raptures of the Prince concerning you, thinking, as he said, that . . . it might not be ungrateful to you to hear of his praises". This at once produced a letter from Scott to Byron, wherein he thanked him very warmly for his "flattering communication", and added a kindly reference to the measure of praise and blame which had been awarded him in *English Bards*. He had been praised for his poetry, but blamed for writing *Marmion* "on contract for a sum of money". Scott showed, with equal dignity and gentleness, that he had not done this. Byron's answer was worthy of the explanation, and a firm friendship thus began between the great poetic rivals of the age. But the rivalry was entirely vicarious—a

device of the reviewers and debating societies to add savour to their articles and discussions;[1] for Scott and Byron could not be brought to regard one another with any sort of jealousy. Jealousy in literary matters was indeed a thing that never troubled Byron from first to last. He knew this: "I really have *no* literary envy", he wrote to Moore in 1814.

His interview with the Regent turned his thoughts for a moment towards Court-circles. Soon afterwards, Dallas found him, "with his fine black [*sic*] hair in powder, which by no means suited his countenance", ready, in full dress, to attend a levee at Carlton House. But the levee was put off, and he never again donned the livery of the courtier — partly from genuine disinclination, partly because an incident of his literary life (soon to be detailed) made it impossible to present himself.

Among the most interesting notes upon him at this time of "lionising" is one by Jane Porter, author of *The Scottish Chiefs*, a novel which even to a period within our own memories enjoyed a sentimental vogue. She met him at the house of William Sotheby, "a man of letters and of fortune", whom in 1818 Byron was to immortalise (in *Beppo*) as "Botherby", the "solemn, antique gentleman of rhyme". Miss Porter made the following note of Byron's appearance, and after his death sent it to Augusta Leigh. "I was not aware of his being in the room, or even that he had been invited, when I was arrested from listening to the person conversing with me by the Sounds of the most melodious Speaking Voice I had ever heard. . . . I turned round . . . and saw a Gentleman in black, of

[1] "At the time when they were the two *lions* of London, Hookham Frere observed, 'Great poets formerly (Homer and Milton) were blind; now they are lame'" (*Table-Talk of Samuel Rogers*).

an elegant form (for nothing of his lameness could be discovered), and with a face I shall never forget. . . . The Eye deep set, but mildly lustrous; and the Complexion . . . *a sort of moonlight paleness.*[1] It was so pale, yet with all so Softly brilliant".

"How very pale you are!" wrote Caroline Lamb to him at the same period. ". . . *E la beltà della morte.* . . . I never see you without wishing to cry". Upon other women of the Devonshire House set, he made a less terribly sentimental impression. Elizabeth, Duchess of Devonshire, thought his face "sickly but handsome", and his figure bad; Harriet Cavendish (then Lady H. Leveson-Gower) found him agreeable, but wished for nothing further than mere acquaintance: "His countenance is fine when it is in repose; but the moment it is in play, suspicious, malignant, and consequently repulsive. His manner is either remarkably gracious and conciliatory, with a tinge of affectation, or irritable and impetuous, and then, I am afraid, perfectly natural".

He must often, in this hour of electric triumph, have found it difficult to be natural in any way. Round him at each gathering there was always to be seen "a circle of star-gazers". . . . Lord Beaconsfield, in his *Venetia*, inimitably presents to us the "new poet, Cadurcis", as he appeared at the evening-parties of 1812.

"'Watch Cadurcis', said Mr. Horace Pole to a fine lady. 'Does not he look sublime? . . . Alone in a crowd, as he says in his last poem. Very interesting!'

"'Wonderful creature!' exclaimed the dame.

"'Charming!' said Mr. Pole. 'Perhaps you will be fortunate enough to be handed in to dinner by him. . . . You must take care, however, not to eat; he cannot endure a woman who eats.'

[1] Italics mine.

"'I never do', said the lady simply; 'at least, at dinner'".

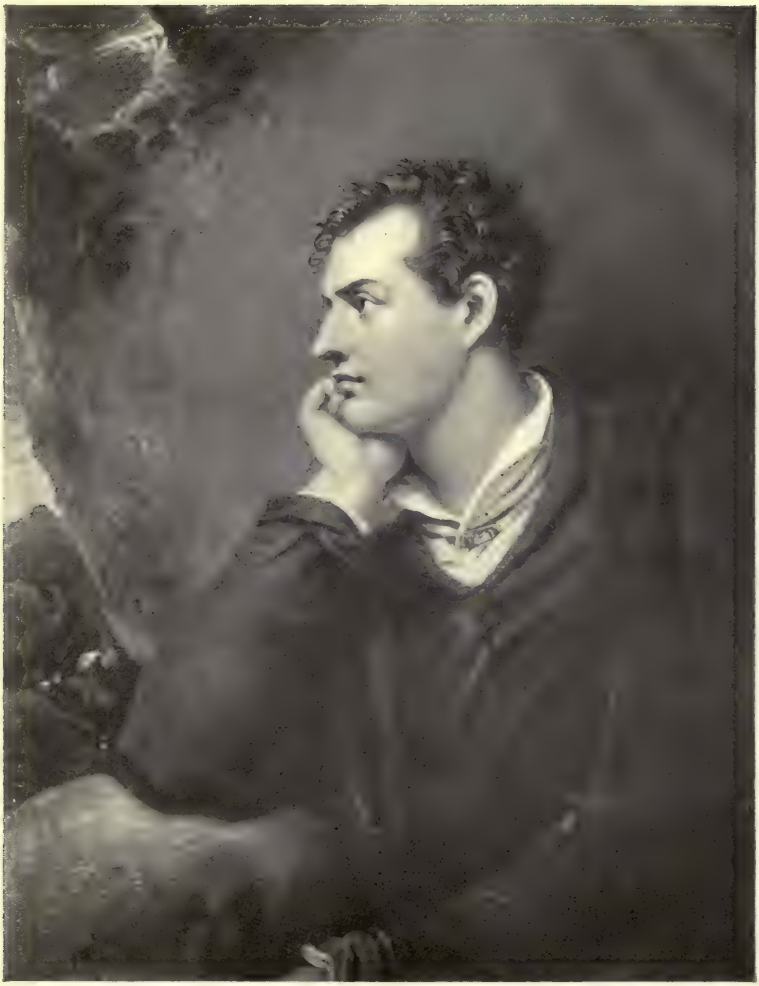
. . . . . .

"'He must be a man of genius', said Mr. Pole; 'he is so unlike everybody; the very tie of his cravat proves it. And his hair, so savage and dishevelled; none but a man of genius would not wear powder. Watch him to-day, and you will observe that he will not condescend to perform the slightest act like an ordinary mortal'.

"'Dear me!' said the lady. 'I am delighted to see him; and yet I hope that I shall not sit by him at dinner'".

She did sit by him, and he was the most entertaining member of the party. "Lady Monteagle" was the hostess — she stands, in *Venetia*, for Caroline Lamb; and Lady Monteagle was "quite delighted", for now "everybody would circulate throughout the world that it was only at *her* house that Lord Cadurcis condescended to be amusing".

Mr. Horace Pole's sardonic comments were not unjustified. Moore describes Byron's "air and port" as "those of one whose better thoughts were elsewhere, and who looked with melancholy abstraction on the gay crowd around him". He attributes it in part to shyness; but admits that a "love of effect and impression" may also have contributed. In the Diary for 1813, Byron records a criticism of his demeanour made by Mme de Staël. "She told Lewis . . . that I was affected, in the first place; and that, in the next place, I committed the heinous offence of sitting at dinner with my *eyes* shut, or half-shut. I wonder if I really have this trick. I must cure myself of it, if true. One insensibly acquires awkward habits, which should be broken in time. If this is



BYRON, 1813-14

FROM THE ENGRAVING BY C. TURNER AFTER THE PAINTING BY R. WESTALL, R.A.

one, I wish I had been told of it before". Thus we see that an apparent affectation of a peculiarly irritating kind was quite unconscious. The truth is, I think, that the Byronic poise suffered from an excess of the qualities both of poises and poses. It was at once too sincere and too effective. Precisely as Byron looked, he felt—alone in a crowd; but then self-consciousness arrived to show him how "sublime" he appeared in this betrayal of his feeling, and thenceforth, though sincerity survived, it was sincerity under the limelight—hardly, like a good actor in a similar plight, to be recognised for the thing it was.

"Nothing", says Moore, "could be more amusing and delightful than the contrast which his manners afterwards when we were alone, presented to his proud reserve in the brilliant circle we had just left. It was like the bursting gaiety of a boy let loose from school, and seemed as if there was no extent of fun or tricks of which he was not capable. Finding him thus invariably lively when we were together, I often rallied him on the gloomy tone of his poetry, as assumed; but his constant answer was (and I soon ceased to doubt of its truth) that, though thus merry and full of laughter with those he liked, he was, at heart, one of the most melancholy wretches in existence".

"Most of his life", observes Mr. Arthur Symons[1] in a penetrating analysis of his mind, "he was a personality looking out for its own formula. . . . Byron was at once the victim and the master of the world . . . [he] and the world seem to touch at all points, and to maintain a kind of equilibrium by the equality of their strength. . . . Never, in English verse, has a man been seen who was so much a man and so much an

[1] Arthur Symons, *The Romantic Movement in English Poetry*. Constable, 1909.

Englishman. It is not man in the elemental sense, so much as the man of the world, whom we find reflected . . . in this poet for whom (like the novelists, and unlike all other poets) society exists as well as human nature".

Beside that profound explanation of him, a shallower one may blush to place itself; but this has its small excuse for existence. There is an everyday side to everything—even to Byron. When he got away with Moore or another intimate, he turned into a merry, happy boy; and the reason for it was that he was a Man's Man. Where women ruled, he was a blighted being—in a meaning different from the usual meaning of that phrase. Everything that was delightful, even (one might go so far as to say) everything that was good in him, emerged for men alone. A woman, perceiving this, becomes aware of a stirring of envy. He would have been so well worth loving "like that"; but like that, no woman, of all those in his life, ever knew him. We are more fortunate nowadays; men show us the man's side sometimes; and hence it is that one often finds the modern woman "in love with Byron's ghost". She is persuaded—and not without justification—that if Byron had lived to-day, he would have liked women better, and that women, liking *him* better, would more wisely and more happily have loved him. However that may be, it is the "man's side" to which, in this chapter, I wish to draw attention.

His letters are its best exposition. By this time they had become incomparable, in their kind, with any but his own later ones. Vivid, witty—with a sort of unconscious wit that comes of their amazing gusto—spontaneous, human, they vibrate with the sound of him as his first reckonable verse does, but far more

than it does—for, as he was to find later, this natural, "prose" way of telling things was the way for him in verse as well as in life. Since his day, we have had our own gift from great letter-writers—Edward FitzGerald, Robert Louis Stevenson, T. E. Brown, to mention only a few; in my opinion, Byron surpasses them all.[1] His range is wider, his diapason richer; his voice has a thrilling quality, a boldness and freedom in the launching, which makes the other voices seem like those of brilliant amateurs beside a great singer's. He has the audacity of Casanova (though he yields him, I imagine, a good deal in *gauloiserie*); the wit of Voltaire; the intensity of Rousseau—and, beyond and away from all this cosmopolitan brotherhood, he has the peculiar "salt" of the Englishman. None of the names above cited stands for such almost visible delight in the wielding of the word as Byron's does. So soon as the early days in Southwell, this emerged. As I then pointed out, the lamentations over his wretched family-life broke down almost in laughter; his pen, as he describes, seems to shake its sides. This—a part of the generic literary spirit, it is true, in one way of regarding it—seems to me a peculiar attribute of the English and Irish mind. No other men (*cæteris paribus*) get the *fun* out of their tribulations that Englishmen and Irishmen get. Soldiers' and explorers' letters are curious instances of this. Behind the most spirited from any who are not either English or Irish, there lurks always the phantom of self-pity; in theirs, self-pity seems forgotten in the sheer absurdity of finding one's self in such a plight. . . . So it was with Byron, once he began to narrate his woes; and when we remember the self-consciousness of

[1] Lord Lovelace, in *Astarte*, says that Byron's *unpublished* letters "have more sincerity, wit, power, and beauty than the best" which we know (p. 24).

his verse, and rejoice in the spontaneity of his letters, we cease to wonder at his persistent cry that poetry was "not his vocation". Until he found the form that really liberated his genius, poetry *was*, in a sense, a prison-house for his mind. With *Beppo* came the first awakening; with *Don Juan*, his verse became, as Mr. Arthur Symons says, "for the first time as good as his prose".

To give instances were to give nearly every letter he wrote, except almost any that he wrote to women. Of those there are comparatively few. Both Elizabeth Pigot's and Augusta Leigh's belong, in any characteristic sense, to the very early Southwell period; afterwards it was to his men-friends, and especially to Moore and Murray, that he sent his masterpieces.

But besides the letters, there are other proofs of Byron's generosity, in both kinds, towards men; and of his delightful enthusiasm for the traits in them which appealed to his imagination. Of Sheridan he never wearied to sing the praises; of Curran he wrote to Moore and in his Journal with an ardour which leaves us mourning (with Rogers) that "so little of Curran's brilliant table-talk has been preserved"; of and to Moore he spoke and wrote in terms so admiring and affectionate that our hearts warm as we read. Moore had moods of depression, and these were possibly intensified by the arrival of so dazzling a competitor in his own field of Eastern poetry. Byron never flagged in encouraging and praising him: "My dear Moore, you strangely underrate yourself. I should conceive it an affectation in any other. . . . But you are laughing at me . . . and if you are not laughing, you deserve to be laughed at. Seriously, what on earth can you, or have you, to dread from any poetical flesh breathing? . . . I know *you* will believe me when I say that I am as

anxious for your success as one human being can be for another's—as much as if I had never scribbled a line".

This complete absence of all professional jealousy is the more endearing because Byron regarded his own literary position as very precarious. One side of him was sincerely indifferent to this; the other —what we may call the publisher's side, for publishers play an important part in creating it—drove him to that watching of the public taste which too often causes the wreck of a writer's true originality. That Byron escaped this disaster, we may almost attribute to the other which he did not escape. It was exile from England which made him the most original of English poets, which produced *Don Juan*, the sole masterpiece of English poetry that has no real parallel in English literature. The form, as in the instance of *Childe Harold* also, was not his own invention; but the matter for which he used the form (again as with *Harold*) was an invention of the first order, and, oddly enough, he has never been imitated in the later combination. *Don Juan* stands alone—recognised as a "thing done" with mastery so complete as to make it, so to speak, its own last word.

To Francis Hodgson, in 1813, Byron's generosity showed itself in a very practical shape. Hodgson had become engaged, and was anxious, before he married, to clear off his father's liabilities. Byron gave him altogether £1500 for the purpose; and he, in a letter to his uncle,[1] thus describes the gift: "My noble-hearted friend, Lord Byron, after many offers of a similar kind, which I felt bound to refuse, has irresistibly in my present circumstances . . . volunteered to pay all my

[1] *Memoir of the Rev. F. Hodgson*, i. 268.

debts, and within a few pounds it is done! Oh, if you knew (but *you* do know) the exaltation of heart, aye, and of head too, I feel at being free from these depressing embarrassments, you would, as I do, bless my dearest friend and brother Byron". And here, in addition to the generosity, we find Byron displaying a beautiful delicacy of feeling. Hodgson had been unable to keep from talking of his friend's kindness, and in December 1813 Byron came to know of this. He wrote: "I have just heard that Knapp[1] is acquainted with what I was but too happy in being enabled to do for you. Now . . . you, or Drury, must have told this, for upon my own honour, not even to Scrope, nor to one soul (Drury knew it before) have I said one syllable of the matter. So don't be out of humour with me about it, but you can't be more so than I am. I am, however, glad of one thing; if you ever conceived it to be in the least an obligation, this disclosure most fairly and fully releases you from it. . . . And so there's an end of the matter". In his Journal he wrote: "I wish there had been more convenience, and less gratification to my self-love in it, for then there had been more merit". It was at about the same time that he lent James Wedderburn Webster £1000; but this transaction, on the beneficiary's side, falls far short of the grace which distinguishes that with Francis Hodgson. "I lent him", wrote Byron (only then repaid) from Genoa in 1822, "a thousand pounds on condition that he would not go to the Jews; he took the moneys, and went to the Jews". Webster, with his black wig, and his mistresses, and his easy sense of honour, was in 1822 on the eve of a separation from his wife—a "moral separation" he called it, but that, one imagines, must always have existed. Byron tried, in 1823, to

[1] Knapp was an intimate friend of Henry Drury.

bring about a reconciliation. It remains uncertain if he, or any one, succeeded in doing so—Lady Frances showed no sign of yielding, at any rate, to the intervention of him who, ten years before, had played so different a part!

But let me give an instance—well-nigh the sole one[1]—of Byron's generosity to a woman. In March 1814, he moved into The Albany from lodgings in Bennet Street, St. James's. He had been attended at these lodgings, during one of his transient illnesses, by an ancient housemaid, one Mrs. Mule, "of whose gaunt and witch-like appearance", says Moore, "it would be impossible to convey any idea but by the pencil". For a whole season she had been "the perpetual scarecrow of his visitors", and when he took chambers in The Albany, they all rejoiced in the thought that she would be left behind. "But no! there she was again; he had actually brought her with him from Bennet Street". When he married in 1815, and took a house in Piccadilly Terrace, it "was concluded, rashly, that the witch had vanished". But one of the friends who had her most in horror happened to call one day when the men-servants were off duty, and the door was opened to him by Mrs. Mule, greatly improved in dress, "with a new peruke". He asked Byron how he came to carry such a guy about with him, and "Byron's only answer was, 'The poor old devil was so kind to me'". He had actually honoured her with an entry in his diary during the Bennet Street days—and in the oddest of connections. "There is something very softening to me", he wrote, "in the presence of a woman—some strange influence, even if one is not in love with them—which I cannot at all account for, having no very high opinion of the sex.

[1] At Ravenna, in 1821, there was a similar episode. He gave an old woman of ninety-five a weekly pension for the rest of her life.

But yet—I always feel in better humour with myself and everything else, if there is a woman within ken. Even Mrs. Mule, my firelighter—the most ancient and withered of her kind—and (except to myself) not the best-tempered, always makes me laugh".

He sincerely believed that this account of himself was true; but, as Moore has shown us, it was not.

Through 1813 his pre-eminence in the drawing-rooms endured; but with the early months of 1814, though in them his greatest literary triumph (in the sense of sales) occurred, an incident connected with it, and indeed part of the reason for the later sales, brought about the first real abatement of the Byron Fever. When, in 1810, King George III had first shown symptoms of insanity, a Regency had been proclaimed; and the Tories, still smarting from the scandal of Mary Anne Clarke and the Duke of York in 1809[1], were for stringent restrictions on the power of the Prince. The Whigs, always the Prince's friends, were opposed to these restrictions. They were made, but early in 1812 they expired; and the Whigs, who for twenty-five years had been out of favour at Court (George III detested them), now naturally expected to be called to power. Lords Grenville and Grey were invited to form a Coalition. As a condition, they demanded the right to nominate afresh all offices in the Household. The Regent peremptorily refused; and at Carlton House, on February 22, 1812, expressed "surprise and mortification" at their attitude. Lord Lauderdale ("shrill, Scotch, and acute", as Byron

[1] This was the inquiry into the charges made by Colonel Wardle against the Duke of York and his mistress, Mrs. Clarke, of traffic in high posts in the Army. The Commons acquitted the Duke of "connivance and corruption" on March 17; he resigned his post of Commander-in-Chief on March 20. The Regent, as one of his acts of power, reappointed his brother in 1181.

described him), who was present, said with rare courage that the reply of Grey and Grenville expressed not only *their* opinion, but that of every other Whig. The Prince, who had drunk immoderately, was profoundly affected by this answer, and broke into violent abuse of the Whigs. Princess Charlotte of Wales (his daughter) "dropt her head and burst into tears". Miss Mercer[1] was at the banquet, and gave Hobhouse an account of the *fracas*. "In spite of pushing round the dessert, Princess Charlotte's emotion became sensible, so that the Prince said, 'You had better retire', with which all the ladies rose". The Prince then, laying hold of Miss Mercer's arm, dragged her into an inner room, and sat there for half an hour. "In consequence, Miss Mercer was forbidden for eight months the entrée to Warwick House—the residence of Princess Charlotte".

On March 7, there appeared anonymously in the *Morning Chronicle* two four-lined stanzas, entitled *Lines to a Lady Weeping*. Their drift remained inexplicable to the general public until March 10, when the *Courier* ventured to insert an account of "The Fracas at Carlton House on the 22nd ult": . . . The Prince was profoundly hurt and angered by the lines, which were indeed sufficiently insulting, and were universally attributed to Moore, whose *Twopenny Post-Bag* was then convulsing the town. They were, in fact, written by Byron. As we have seen, the Regent, still unknowing of this prank, caused him to be presented privately in June 1812, and Byron dressed for the levee at Carlton House soon afterwards. That he should have done this, knowing himself the unsuspected author of the so deeply-resented verses, is one proof among many

[1] Supposed to be the original of Miss Edgeworth's "Miss Broadhurst"; called the "fops' despair"; not handsome, but with fine eyes, attractive, sensible, and not at all shy (Hobhouse's Journal).

of that strange lack of delicate feeling which continually emerges in his actions; and indeed this very incident was to offer a second, and far more remarkable, instance of the same thing. On February 1, 1814—two years after the "*fracas*"—*The Corsair* was published, and to the second edition, which immediately was called for, there were appended six short pieces. Among these stood the *Lines to a Lady Weeping*—thus wantonly acknowledged, long after they and the tears which produced them had been forgotten by all the world! What his motive was remains a mystery. Jeaffreson suggests that it may have been a generous sympathy with Leigh Hunt, who had also "libelled" the Regent, and had been imprisoned for it in Horsemonger Lane Gaol. Byron had met Hunt in the summer of 1812, through Moore's introduction, and had been greatly attracted. . . . If it *were* sympathy, assuredly it was of a very foolish kind. The avowal of the lines could not possibly serve Hunt in any way, and was sure to make their author many dangerous enemies.

Murray tried to save the situation. For the second edition he could do nothing, but, Byron being out of town, he "omitted the Tears" from the third, and drew down upon himself hot anger and insulting letters from the author. There are three scathing notes—one of February 12, the other two both of February 14; and in the fourth edition, Murray was forced to restore the verses. The turmoil in the Press was inconceivable. Abuse was poured upon Byron every day; all that he had ever done, or been, or said, or written, was raked up against him, and the writers did not spare even his physical defect. In short, as he said himself, they were "in hysterics". The Prince, it was reported, had shed tears on learning that the lines were by Byron; and this did disturb him: "I feel a little compunctious as to the

Regent's *regret*:—would he had been only angry! but I fear him not". He professed himself otherwise indifferent, but that he was not entirely so is proved by a MS. fragment, not printed, but plainly intended as a reply to the *Courier*, which had led the attack from the first.

His friends were furious. Dallas rushed into the fray; Mackintosh wrote a defensive article in the *Morning Chronicle*; Wedderburn Webster, too, longed to engage, but Byron stringently forbade him. His own letters at the time were so melancholy that Moore grew uneasy, and offered to come to town that they might laugh it off together. But Byron, though admitting the depression, repudiated any notion of its being the doing of the newspapers. No: he had much to ponder on of the most gloomy description, but it arose from "*other* causes". "Some day or other, when we are *veterans*, I may tell you a tale of present and past times; and it is not from want of confidence that I do not now—but—but—always a *but* to the end of the chapter. There is nothing, however, upon the *spot* either to love or hate; but I certainly have subjects for both at no very great distance, and am besides embarrassed between *three* whom I know, and one (whose name at least) I do not know. All this would be very well if I had no heart; but unluckily I have found that there is such a thing still about me . . . and also that it has a habit of attaching itself to *one* whether I will or no".

All through the Journal at this time run the same mysterious references; on March 10, the entry is obscure to a degree. "I shall have letters of importance to-morrow. Which, **, **, or **? Heigho! ** is in my heart, ** in my head, ** in my eye, and the *single* one, Heaven knows where. All write, and will be answered". . . . In the chambers of the West End, I wonder how

many another attractive bachelor might make an identical entry in his (improbably existent) diary! Byron, like most men of his day, was never out of intrigue, and never in love. Not to be in love is nearly as uncomfortable a thing as to be in it: diaries darken for both states. Byron's, at the time of Lady Frances Wedderburn Webster's reign, was no more gloomy than at the period when "*three*" were claimants, and the single one, Heaven knew where. It cannot be too sedulously borne in mind that, for love in all its phases and disguises, he was the Sentimentalist to an extent so great as to absolve us from sympathy, not to say serious interest. A recent writer has declared that a "Life of Byron" is synonymous with "The Love-Affairs of Byron"—perhaps the most foolish and shallow of the many judgments in that sort which have been delivered upon him. But let that writer, and others of the same sex, be forgiven. It is natural that men should not see this so clearly as women do, for few men yet realise how deeply love has been degraded by the confusion with lust and vanity and egoism to which they must bear the greater portion of the guilt for having subjected it.

In this respect, Moore was a bad friend for Byron. "Thomas Little" had done much to drag love down to the level at which Byron practically, though not theoretically or consciously, regarded it; and the spirit of the age was with them both. But the difference between them was that Moore, lesser as he was in all things, could sing in one way and live in another. With his Bessy, there was no happier husband than "Anacreon"—and the domesticated Anacreon still sang the Cynthias of the moment. That kind of duality was impossible for Byron. "He is fundamentally sincere", says Mr. Arthur Symons; . . . "In his work, truth lies at the root of rhetoric . . . Not to have been sincere

. . . would have been, for Byron, to have lost all hold on our sympathy, all command of our admiration". What we can accept, smilingly, from the little lyre of Thomas Moore, it would be unthinkable that we should listen to on the organ of Byron. We do not want to hear polkas in churches. And so, while the one could prattle of lust and live cleanly, the other went through life as the "Don Juan of the ideal", never finding the "*single* one", incapable (as I think) of recognising her if he had found her, so distorted was his actual vision of woman—and made restless from beginning to end of his days by the quest. Woman never really mattered in his apparent life; in his unapparent life, she mattered more than anything else. That is why I regard his love-affairs as things of little importance to any one but their victims. Worthily to write of Byron, indeed, is to write of all but them.

A strange mood in which to approach the absorbing question of his marriage, it may seem! For by the end of 1814, he was engaged. Yet I think this mood is the right one in which to approach it. Marriage was his grand convulsive effort to end the quest. He could not bear it and its consequences any longer. . . . The mistake he made is made over and over again by men and women. Just *because* they have not ended the quest—they end it, or think to end it. That they fail in doing so is everyday's news. Byron failed more inevitably and more ruinously than most: more inevitably, because he was so emphasised a creature; more ruinously, because he gave the girl he married so much more to bear than "her duty to God and man" permitted her to bear. Most women would have found him hard to live with; most women would have been shattered by such a speech, for instance, as his on the night of his marriage.

Waking up from his first sleep, he found himself in a red world: "A taper which burned in the room was casting a ruddy glare through the crimson curtains of the bed. He exclaimed in so loud a voice that he wakened Lady Byron, 'Good God, I am surely in hell!'" . . . Annabella Milbanke—a woman incapable of humour—heard that speech. She who could, after the first pain, have laughed at it, would assuredly have been made of coarser stuff, but she would have had a better chance of "keeping" Byron. Not to be able to understand the vein in him which created such a moment was to be foredoomed to failure; and not only to failure, but to more and more of the same pain—for he was like a boy in that, as he was in so much else. The more he found he could "shock", the more he tried to shock; and alas! malignity entered the game when he found that each attempt was silently resented. What finally separated Lord and Lady Byron we now know; what made it impossible for them to live together we have always known—those of us who have any instinct for incompatibilities.

CHAPTER XV

MARRIAGE AND SEPARATION—1815–1816

Annabella Milbanke—Thoughts of marriage—The two letters—An entry in his diary — Engaged — Married — *The Dream* — Honeymooning at Halnaby—Discrepant accounts—Seaham—Restlessness and dejection—Life in London—Money matters—Drury Lane—Annabella and Augusta—Bitter words—Birth of Ada—Departure of Lady Byron—Madness?—Letters from Kirkby Mallory—The separation

ANNA ISABELLA ("ANNABELLA") MILBANKE was the daughter and only child of Sir Ralph Milbanke of Halnaby, Darlington, Yorks, and Seaham House, in the county of Durham. He had married the Hon. Judith Noel, eldest daughter of Viscount Wentworth, and this one child was born to them in May 1792. Sir Ralph was brother to Lady Melbourne, and it was at Melbourne House that Miss Milbanke and Byron became acquainted—meeting at the very height of the Byron Fever, and of the intrigue with Caroline Lamb, who was Annabella's cousin by marriage.

Byron's first mention of the name which was to shadow his own so darkly occurs in a letter to Caroline of May 1, 1812. She had sent him some verses of her cousin's composition for his criticism, and he wrote in much praise of them, and in more, yet less, praise of their author. "She certainly is an extraordinary girl; who would imagine so much strength and variety of

thought under that placid countenance? . . . I have no desire to be better acquainted with Miss Milbanke; she is too good for a fallen spirit to know, and I should like her more if she were less perfect".[1]

She made this impression on others besides Byron. That susceptible young man Augustus Foster (who had been so disconcerted by Caroline Ponsonby's marriage) was one of Miss Milbanke's serious suitors. Away in Washington, he would eagerly read reports from his mother about this "odd girl", as the Duchess of Devonshire,[2] so different in temperament, could not but find her. "Good, amiable, and sensible"—those blighting eulogies!—"but cold, prudent, and reflecting". And the Duchess, writing on May 4, 1812 (three days after Byron's letter to Caroline), adds something which proves her to have been almost uncannily sharp-sighted. "Lord Byron makes up to her a little, but she don't seem to admire him except as a poet, nor he her, *except as a wife*". That was a hit indeed—more palpable than she can at all have supposed; for, adored by Caroline Lamb, run after by the half of feminine society, already marked for approval by the irresistible, and unresisted, Lady Oxford, Byron nevertheless had approached Miss Milbanke as a suitor before the autumn of 1812 was over—and had been repulsed.

At the end of August 1813, she wrote and told him the reason for her refusal of the year before. His advances had not been made in person: Lady Melbourne had "undertaken to ascertain" how far he might hope, and had been given to understand, by the girl's mother, that he might not hope at all. Annabella now, a year later, told him that she cared for some one else, but that her love was not returned. He answered by saying

[1] *L. and J.* ii. 118.

[2] She had been, by her first marriage, Lady Elizabeth ("Betty") Foster.

that his offer to her had been the "first approach ever made on his part to a permanent union with any woman, and in all probability would be the last"; and went on, "I must be candid with you on the score of friendship. It is a feeling towards you with which I cannot trust myself. I doubt whether I could help loving you".[1] His first mention of the correspondence occurs in his Journal on November 26. "Two letters; one from [Annabella],[2] the other from Lady Melbourne . . . [Annabella's] contained also a very pretty lyric on 'concealed griefs'; if not her own, yet very like her. Why did she not say that the stanzas were, or were not, of her own composition?" An irresistibly humorous entry! We see that Byron could be naïve; we see also that he was not a coxcomb. She wrote again three days later: "A very pretty letter . . . which I answered. What an odd situation and friendship is ours!—without one spark of love on either side, and produced by circumstances which in general lead to coldness on one side, and aversion on the other". (Here again I cannot refrain from pointing out that Byron could be naïve.) "She is a very superior woman, and very little spoiled, which is strange in an heiress—a girl of twenty—a peeress that is to be, in her own right—an only child, and a *savante*, who has always had her own way. She is a poetess—a mathematician—a metaphysician, and yet, withal, very kind, generous, and gentle, with very little pretension. Any other head would be turned with half her acquisitions, and a tenth of her advantages".

At this time he was thinking half-seriously of wooing Lady Frances Webster's younger sister, Lady Catherine

[1] *L. and J.* iii. App. iii. pp. 398 and 399.

[2] According to Jeaffreson (p. 161). He alone gives the name; other editors employ asterisks.

Annesley; and his Journal contains a characteristic passage on matrimony. Lady Catherine "is young, beautiful, and, I think, a fool. But I have not seen enough to judge; besides, I hate an *esprit* in petticoats. That she won't love me is very probable, nor shall I love her. But on my system, and the modern system in general, that don't signify. . . . She would have her own way; I am good-humoured to women, and docile; and, if I did not fall in love with her, which I should try to prevent, we should be a very comfortable couple. . . . If I love, I shall be jealous; and for that reason, I will not be in love. Though, after all, I doubt my temper, and fear I should not be so patient as becomes the *bienséance* of a married man in my station. Divorce ruins the poor *femme*, and damages are a paltry compensation. . . . So 'I'll none o't', but e'en remain single and solitary—though I should like to have some one now and then to yawn with".

Beyond doubt his thoughts were tending marriage-wards,[1] but another girl was to intervene before Annabella's spell worked again. On March 21, 1814, he saw at a party Lady Charlotte Leveson-Gower,[2] eldest daughter of the then Countess of Stafford (later Duchess of Sutherland). "They say she is *not* pretty. I don't know—everything is pretty that pleases; but there is an air of *soul* about her—and her colour changes—and there is that shyness of the antelope (which I delight in) in her manner so much that I . . . only looked at anything else when I thought she might perceive and be

[1] In 1814 Byron proposed to Miss Mercer Elphinstone, *suo jure* Baroness Keith. She married, in 1817, Auguste Charles Joseph, Comte de Flahault de la Billarderie, subsequently Ambassador to Vienna, Berlin, and (1860) London. With Lady Jersey, Miss Elphinstone stood by Byron in the storm of public opinion against him in April 1816. She was a great heiress, and became, in 1837, *suo jure* Baroness Nairne.

[2] Afterwards Countess of Surrey.

embarrassed by my scrutiny".[1] This evidently exquisite girl was a friend of Augusta, and was also closely connected with the Carlisles. It is significant that at this time he was anxious to "make it up" with Lord Carlisle, and told Rogers that he felt "disposed to do anything reasonable or unreasonable to effect it".

Can Lady Charlotte have been the "other lady" to whom he proposed by letter, in the same hour that he proposed, also by letter, for the second time to Annabella Milbanke? Moore gives the extraordinary story only "as far as I can trust my recollection" of Byron's Memoranda. "A person who had for some time stood high in his affection and confidence"—it was Augusta: Hobhouse says that he wrote his letter of proposal to Miss Milbanke from her house[2]—". . . advised him strenuously to marry; and, after much discussion, he consented. The next point . . . was —who was to be the object of his choice; and while his friend mentioned one lady, he himself named Miss Milbanke". But his adviser strongly objected. Miss Milbanke had at present no fortune, and he must not marry without one; moreover, she was a learned lady, and that would not suit him. He then agreed that "his friend" should write a proposal for him to the other lady named, which was accordingly done; and an answer, containing a refusal, arrived while they were sitting together. "'You see', said Byron, 'that after all Miss Milbanke is to be the person; I will write to her'. He accordingly wrote on the moment, and . . . his friend, remonstrating still strongly against his choice, took up the letter, but, on reading it over, observed,

[1] Journal for March 22, 1814.

[2] *Recollections of a Long Life*, ii. 193. But in the *Letters and Journals*, letters of this period—see particularly two of September 15 to Moore—are dated from Newstead.

'Well, really, this is a very pretty letter; it is a pity it should not go—I never read a prettier one'. 'Then it *shall* go,' said Lord Byron; and in so saying sealed and sent off, on the instant, this fiat of his fate".

"Nothing", said Christopher North, commenting on this part of Moore's book, "in the lowest farce was ever lower"; but though we can scarcely restrain a smile as we read in Hobhouse, that Miss Milbanke not only answered by return of post, but *sent a duplicate of her letter to London*, in case that directed to the country should miss him—the comedy seems to turn to something very like tragedy in the narrative of Mrs. Beecher Stowe's interview with Lady Byron in 1856.[1] "*At last*" (and the phrase is significant) ". . . he sent her a very beautiful letter, offering himself again. 'I thought', she added, 'that it was sincere, and that I might now show him all I felt. I wrote just what was in my heart. Afterwards, I found in one of his journals this notice of my letter: 'A letter from Bell—it never rains but it pours'".

"There was through her habitual calm", says Mrs. Stowe, "a shade of womanly indignation as she spoke these words. . . . I said, 'And did he not love you then?' She answered, 'No, my dear; he did not love me'".

All this happened between September 15 and 18. He wrote to Moore on the 15th to say that "a circumstance of importance" was likely to occur and change his plans. If it did not, he was "off for Italy" next month. If it did, "I can't well go abroad at present". He was "in three or four perplexities, which he did not see his way through, but a few days, perhaps a day, would determine *one of them*".[2] On the 18th he wrote

[1] For the history of the Beecher Stowe revelation, see Appendix I.: "Mrs Beecher Stowe".

[2] Italics mine.

to tell Hanson that he was engaged to Miss Milbanke. "I have this day received her acceptance, and an invitation from Sir R. to join them in the country". Moore tells us that the day her letter of acceptance arrived, he was at dinner when the gardener came in and gave him his mother's wedding-ring, which she had lost many years before, and which the gardener had just found in digging. Almost at the same instant, Annabella's letter was handed to him, and he exclaimed, "If it contains a consent, I will be married with this very ring". . . . Strange, that the superstitious Byron should have chosen so ominous a token—just as the original wearer had chosen the unpropitious 13th of May for her own wedding.

Shortly afterwards, he went to Sir Ralph's in the character of betrothed; and here I turn again to the narrative of Mrs. Stowe. "The visit was to her full of disappointment. His appearance was so strange, moody and unaccountable, and his treatment of her so peculiar that she came to the conclusion that he did not love her, and sought an opportunity to converse with him alone. She told him that she saw from his manner that their engagement did not give him pleasure; that she should never blame him if he wished to dissolve it . . . and if, on a nearer view of the situation, he shrank from it, she would release him and remain no less than ever his friend. 'Upon this', she said, 'he fainted entirely away'. She stopped a moment, and then, as if speaking with great effort, added, 'Then I was *sure* he must love me'".

Hodgson met him by chance at Cambridge,[1] on his

[1] It was at this time that Byron went to Cambridge to vote for Dr. Clark, who was a candidate for the Professorship of Anatomy. When he appeared in the Senate House on November 23, 1814, to give his vote, "the young men burst out into the most rapturous applause". Hobhouse was present, and makes the comment: "This, they tell me, is unique. He looked as red as

way to Seaham, and wrote a gushing account to his *fiancée*, Miss Tayler. There were confidences relating to money affairs, and the good fellow adds: "He is sacrificing a great deal too much. . . . Her parents (although B. speaks of them with the most *beautiful* respect) certainly appear to me to be royally selfish persons. Her fortune is *not* large at present, but he settles £60,000 upon her. This he cannot do *without selling Newstead again*;[1] and with a look and manner that I cannot easily forget, he said, 'You know we must think of these things as little as possible. . . . Bless her! she has nothing to do with it'".

Now this evidence against Miss Milbanke's parents, written spontaneously before the troubles, seems to me more weighty than even the detailed account by Hobhouse of their arrangements with Byron, whereby the pecuniary advantages were entirely theirs. The marriage-settlements gave him £1000 a year at present with his wife, but out of this he was to pay her £300 a year as pin-money—"so that his actual gain in marrying was £700 a year". In return for this addition to his income, he settled on her £60,000 on the Newstead estate. She was heiress to Lord Wentworth's £7000 a year, but would not come in for it until after her mother's death. The parents "considered this contingency as a set-off against Lord Byron's settlement, for they made no proposal of securing any part of Sir Ralph's estate to his Lordship"; and although Hanson informed him that he might fairly demand it, "Lord Byron positively refused". When

fire". But Hodgson, who met him coming away, was struck by his "extreme paleness and agitation". He asked Hodgson to write and tell Miss Milbanke, which Hodgson did, and received from her a note in the manner which was peculiarly hers: a kind of graceful stiffness, more like an elderly great lady's than a girl's.

[1] By this time Mr. Claughton had paid his forfeiture of £25,000.

Hobhouse and Jeaffreson indignantly refute the theory that Byron married for money, they are justified of their indignation; and Hobhouse, later on, was to have such proof of Lady Milbanke's (Noel's) rapacity as to draw from him the epithet "indecent".

On December 24, 1814, at twelve o'clock, Byron and Hobhouse, who was to be groomsman, left London on the wedding-journey to Seaham. They parted company for a day on the road;[1] on the 26th they set out again, and Hobhouse, in his Journal, makes the significant comment, "Never was lover less in haste". Next day he amplifies it: "The bridegroom more and more *less* impatient". Further, in his statement of 1816 about the separation, he says: "Lord Byron frankly confessed that he was not in love with his intended bride; but at the same time he said that he felt for her that regard which was the surest guarantee of continued affection and matrimonial felicity". Byron told him too that he (Byron) had suggested waiting a year or so—he considering himself as an engaged man—before marrying. His affairs were again involved, and he thought it fair to give the lady and her family every opportunity of delay. His suggestion had been declined.

They arrived at Seaham on December 30, at eight o'clock in the evening. Hobhouse's first impression was not flattering. "Miss Milbanke rather dowdy-looking, and wears a long and high dress (as Byron had observed) though she has excellent feet and ankles. . . . The lower part of her face is bad, the upper expressive, but not handsome, yet she gains by inspection". Here is Byron's own description of her to Medwin. "There

[1] Byron went to stay with Augusta at Six Mile Bottom, Newmarket (*Astarte*, p. 256).

was something piquant and what we term pretty about Miss Milbanke. Her features were small and feminine, though not regular. She had the fairest skin imaginable. Her figure was perfect for her height; and there was a simplicity, a retired modesty about her which was very characteristic". The roundness of her face suggested to him the nickname of "Pippin", by which she liked to call herself during the happy period of their intercourse.

There was some "feeling" at Seaham about the long delay on the road, and Annabella, on greeting Byron, burst into tears—"but not before us", says Hobhouse, meaning himself and Sir Ralph, who had "tottered in" to receive them. Lady Milbanke had gone to her room before they arrived. An inauspicious beginning; but "of my friend, Miss Milbanke seemed dotingly fond, gazing with delight on his bold and animated face. . . . Byron appears to love her personally when in her company"; but Hobhouse thought that she "inspired an interest which it was easy to mistake for love". "Sir Ralph", he continues, "is an honest, red-faced spirit, a little prosy,[1] but by no means devoid of humour. My lady, who has been a dasher in her day, and has ridden the grey mare, is pettish and tiresome, but clever. Both are dotingly fond of Miss Milbanke".

January 2, 1815, was the wedding-day. The ceremony took place in the drawing-room at Seaham, the Rector of Kirkby Mallory[2] officiating. Miss Milbanke, "dressed in a muslin gown trimmed with lace at the bottom, with a white muslin curricle jacket, very plain indeed, with nothing on her head", was quite composed, and "during the whole ceremony, looked steadily at

[1] The Duchess of Devonshire called him "old twaddle Ralph".

[2] Kirkby Mallory was the Leicestershire estate of Viscount Wentworth, to which Lady Milbanke (Noel) succeeded later in the same year.

Byron". "Byron . . . when he came to the words, 'with all my worldly goods I thee endow', looked at me with a half smile".

This amusing and unmistakably veracious detail of Byron's demeanour accords badly with the familiar passage in *The Dream*, where he describes his feelings and behaviour at his wedding.

> ". . . as he stood
> Even at the altar, o'er his brow there came
> The self-same aspect, and the quivering shock
> That in the antique Oratory shook
> His bosom in its solitude; and then—
> As in that hour—a moment o'er his face
> The tablet of unutterable thoughts
> Was traced—and then it faded as it came,
> And he stood calm and quiet, and he spoke
> The fitting vows, but heard not his own words,
> And all things reeled around him; he could see
> . . . . . .
> The day, the hour, the sunshine, and the shade,
> All things pertaining to that place and hour
> And her who was his destiny, came back
> And thrust themselves between him and the light:
> What business had they there at such a time?"

Moore says that this agrees closely with Byron's own account, in his destroyed Memoirs, of the wedding. He woke (says that account) in the morning "with the most melancholy reflections, on seeing his wedding-suit spread out before him"; and, still melancholy, wandered about the grounds alone till summoned for the ceremony—then joining, for the first time that day, his bride and her parents. "He knelt down, he repeated the words after the clergyman; but a mist was before his eyes—his thoughts were elsewhere; and he was but awakened by the congratulations . . . to find that he was—married". Jeaffreson's comment on this passage is (especially when taken with Hobhouse's little detail) a refreshing draught of

common-sense. He reduces the melancholy to the sanctioned low-spiritedness of all bridegrooms; and Byron's surprise at finding himself married "may be said of fifty out of every hundred of them". The really striking point that Jeaffreson makes, however, is that in this account of Byron's own, no mention is made of any memories of Annesley. "It does not appear that Byron, either before or at the ceremony, had a single thought of Mary Chaworth on his wedding-day".

We must not forget—and I have pointed this out before—the time at which *The Dream* was written: July 1816, just after the separation. But I do not go so far as to call the publication "an act of revenge", which is Jeaffreson's view. A dream of Mary may well have visited Byron at this (or for that matter, any) epoch; and if it visited him then, we must be unversed indeed in the literary spirit if we call the poem "false", because he had not felt just like that at just the right moment. To feel like that at some moment was enough, in the artistic sense, for veracity.

Now that the marriage-ceremony is over, we enter without delay the region of the "Byron Separation Mystery". From the moment of leaving the house on the honeymoon-trip to Halnaby, discrepancies begin—all fervently attested by the makers of them. He himself, as might have been expected, was one of these makers, and of course Medwin was the hearer. "I was surprised", Byron is reported to have said to him, "at the arrangements for the journey, and somewhat out of humour to find a lady's-maid stuck between me and my bride. It was rather too early to assume the husband, so I was forced to submit, but it was not with a very good grace. . . . I have been accused of saying, on getting into the carriage, that I had married Lady

Byron out of spite, and because she had refused me twice. Though I was for a moment vexed at her prudery, or whatever you may choose to call it, if I had made so uncavalier, not to say brutal, a speech, I am convinced Lady Byron would instantly have left the carriage".

When Hobhouse, in 1824, read this, he "exclaimed fiercely that Medwin was an infamous impostor. He had himself handed Lady Byron into the carriage, and could swear there was no maid in it".[1] In his Journal we have an account of the going away: "Lady Byron came in her travelling-dress, a slate-coloured satin pelisse trimmed with white fur. . . . Byron was calm and as usual. I felt as if I had buried a friend. . . . At a little before twelve, I handed Lady Byron downstairs and into her carriage. When I wished her many years of happiness, she said, 'If I am not happy it will be my own fault'".

His testimony must be accepted, for no one else could know so well; and we are aware that Byron told Medwin anything that happened to come into his head. But in a letter to Moore of March 8, on the eve of their departure from Seaham (whither they had returned after the honeymoon at Halnaby), there is a remark which is not without significance: "By this time to-morrow I shall be stuck in the chariot with my chin on a band-box. *I have prepared another carriage for the abigail, however*".[2]

Possibly there is truth in both stories. The maid may have been called into the carriage on the way; and in this connection it will be well to examine the account given, after Lady Byron's death, by Lord Lindsay. His testimony was based entirely on a written passage by Lady Anne Barnard,[3] who had known Annabella from

[1] Jeaffreson, p. 178. [2] Italics mine.

[3] Lady Anne Barnard was sister to Lady Margaret Bland Burges; they

infancy. During the early days of the separation scandal, she wrote and asked Lady Byron to come and see her, if sympathy or counsel would be any help. "She came; but what a tale was unfolded by this interesting young creature. . . . They had not been an hour in the carriage which conveyed them from the church [*sic*] when, breaking into a malignant sneer: 'Oh, what a dupe you have been to your imagination! How is it possible a woman of your sense could form the wild hope of reforming *me*? . . . It is enough for me that you are my wife for me to hate you. If you were the wife of any other man, I own you might have charms'. . . . I who listened" (says Lady Anne) "was astonished: 'How could you go on after this, my dear?' I said; 'why did you not return to your father's?' 'Because I had not a conception that he was in earnest. . . . He laughed it over when he saw me appear hurt.'"

In Mrs. Stowe's account of her interview with Lady Byron, his words are differently given: "'You *might* have saved me once, madam! You had all in your own power when I offered myself to you first. Then you might have made me what you pleased; but now you will find that you have married a devil'".

Both these reports claim to have been taken down from the wife's own lips: there must be some truth in them. Without discussing what can be thought of such behaviour, or how it can be accounted for, we may take it that the point of the maid's presence is thus cleared up. Almost certainly she was

were both born Lindsay. Sir James Bland Burges was the second husband of Lady Margaret, who was his third wife. *He had married first the Hon. Elizabeth Noel, sister of Lady Milbanke.* Lady Anne Barnard was the author of *Auld Robin Gray*; Sir James Bland Burges was the "Jamie" of that poem. Lady Margaret was, before she married him, Lady Margaret Fordyce. Lady Anne Barnard died in 1825.

summoned to the carriage, at their first resting-place,[1] by her terrified young mistress. Girls were "older" at twenty-three in those days than they now are, but they were still too young to be capable of dealing with such a companion.

For the arrival at Halnaby we have the same conflict of tongues. Miss Martineau—a friend of Lady Byron's later years—says that the bride "alighted from her carriage with a face and attitude of despair. . . . The bridegroom jumped out . . . and walked away. . . . [She] came up the steps alone with a countenance and frame agonised and listless".[2] Directly contrary to this is the testimony of Mrs. Minns, the "abigail", who declared to a northern newspaper (*The Newcastle Chronicle*), in 1869,[3] that she saw the bride descend "buoyant and happy as a bride should be".

To judge from Byron's letters to his friends, during the three weeks at Halnaby,[4] their honeymoon—"treacle-moon", as he called it with his wonted ribaldry—survived this inauguration. But Mrs. Minns gives an account which shows that, whatever *he* may have felt, the bride was far from happy. "The irregularities of Lord Byron occasioned her the greatest distress, and she even contemplated returning to her father. Mrs. Minns was her constant companion and confidant through this painful period, and she does not believe that her ladyship concealed a thought from her". But the lady's-maid absolutely refused to disclose the particulars of

[1] She was, according to her own testimony, present at the wedding-ceremony, and therefore cannot have "preceded them" (as she also affirmed) by very far.

[2] Harriet Martineau, *Biographical Sketches*, "Lady Noel Byron", p. 316 (second edition, 1869).

[3] Cited in *Quarterly Review*, October 1869.

[4] In Hobhouse's statement (*Recollections*, ii. 281) we find the admission that "her ladyship appeared always dismayed when she spoke of her residence at Halnaby".

Lord Byron's conduct at this time; "*she had given Lady Byron a solemn promise not to do so*".[1] So serious did she consider his behaviour that she advised the bride to tell all to her father. At one time Lady Byron had resolved to do this; but when, after the three weeks at Halnaby, they returned to Seaham Hall, Mrs. Minns was told that she had changed her mind and that not a word was to be said on the subject.[2]

Byron was considerably bored at Seaham, where they stayed six weeks, arriving on January 21. He wrote to Moore on February 2: "The treaclemoon is over, and I am awake, and find myself married. My spouse and I agree to — and in — admiration. . . . I still think one ought to marry upon *lease*; but am very sure I should renew mine at the expiration, though next term were for ninety-and-nine years. . . . I must go to tea—damn tea". On February 10: "By the way, don't engage yourself in any travelling expedition, as I have a plan of travel into Italy. . . . If I take my wife, you can take yours; and if I leave mine, you may do the same". But a fortnight later, "So you *won't* go abroad, then, with *me*—but alone. I fully purpose starting much about the time you mention, *and alone, too*".[3] This significant announcement is followed by asterisks; and it is in the same letter that he alludes in such bitter dejection to the death of the Duke of Dorset:[4] "There was a time when this event would have broken my heart, and all I can say for it now is that—it is not worth breaking. Adieu—it is all a farce".

On March 9 Lord and Lady Byron left Seaham,

[1] Italics mine.
[2] See Chapter XVI. for the "dismaying" honeymoon at Halnaby.
[3] Italics mine.
[4] See Chapter III.

and on their way to London stopped with Augusta at Six Mile Bottom, Newmarket, until the 28th. Augusta wrote much to Hodgson of their bliss, though she found Byron's nerves and spirits "very far from what she wished". She attributed this to "the uncomfortable state of his affairs"; for in her view, he had found a paragon in Annabella. "I think I never saw or heard or read of a more perfect being in mortal mould than she appears to be".[1]

On the 28th the bride and bridegroom left for London, where Hobhouse had taken for them *13* Piccadilly Terrace (overlooking the Green Park), from the Duchess of Devonshire, at a rent of £700 a year. Again the omen! Yet Byron was among the most superstitious of men. Hobhouse saw him on the day of arrival. "[Byron] advises me not to marry, though he has the best of wives". This friend then went over to Paris—it was the Hundred Days, and he wished to see his other idol, Napoleon—and did not return until July 23. On the 27th he saw the Byrons, and heard that Newstead was again in the market. It was put up at Garraway's on the 28th, but had to be bought in at £95,000. "Called on Lady Noel,[2] who wants Byron to sell hugely". . . . Henceforth that invaluable weather-glass, the Journal of Hobhouse, shows a steady-gathering storm:

"*July* 31.—Byron confesses he sometimes thinks that nothing is left for it but to follow Whitbread's example.[3] Byron is not more happy than before marriage".

[1] *Memoir of Francis Hodgson*, ii. pp. 13, 14, 16.

[2] Lord Wentworth had died in April, leaving the bulk of his property to his sister, Lady Milbanke, who was to assume the name and arms of Noel only.

[3] Samuel Whitbread, the son of a wealthy brewer, was a well-known public man. He was M.P. for Bedford. At the time of Byron's connection

"*August* 4.—B. tells me he and she have begun a little snubbing on money-matters. Marry not, says he".

"*November* 25.—Called on B. In that quarter things do not go well. Strong advice against marriage. Talked of going abroad".

Now let us look at Lady Byron's side.

They lived very quietly in Piccadilly Terrace, for two reasons. "Lady Byron", wrote her husband to Moore on June 12, 1815, "is better than three months advanced in her progress to maternity. . . . We have been out very little this season, as I wish to keep her as quiet as possible". The other reason, still more cogent, was want of means. Lord Wentworth's death in April had enriched only Lady Milbanke (Noel); its result for Byron was to bring down creditors upon him with loud demands for a payment which, mistaking the circumstances, they believed that he was now in a position to make. All he had gained from his marriage, as we have seen, was £700 a year — the mere rent of his abode as a married man. Newstead was again in the market, but the purchaser had not appeared, and did not appear until 1817. In short, money-matters were in the hopeless state familiar to all Byrons. Before January 15, 1816, there were nine executions in the house. Byron's health and temper suffered seriously. He told Hobhouse that his embarrassments were such as to drive him half-mad. "No man should marry", he said; "it doubles all his misfortunes and diminishes all his comforts. My wife is perfection itself—the best creature breathing; but mind what I say, *don't marry*".

Other more trifling matters contributed to Lady

with Drury Lane Theatre in 1815, Whitbread was manager. He killed himself on July 6, 1815.

Byron's discomfort. Her husband's frequent visits to Melbourne House caused her uneasiness. The feeling was of course on account of Caroline Lamb, for Lady Melbourne had always been a firm adherent of Annabella. Caroline, in her letter to Medwin, says that Lady Melbourne took her to Piccadilly Terrace shortly after the marriage: it was then that she saw Byron for "the last time upon this earth". Byron's horrible story of the visit is well known: it occurs in the Medwin book. "It so happened that three married women were on a wedding visit to my wife (and in the same room at the same time) whom I had known to be all birds of the same nest". By Caroline's account, "Mrs. Leigh, myself, Lady Melbourne, Lady Noel, and Lady Byron were in the room". Annabella's version is entirely at variance with these, and very interestingly so. "[Caroline] has never called on me, and when I made her a vis—[*sic*] with my mother, was very dignified. I never told you of it, nor of my meeting with Mrs. Musters there. She asked after B. Such a wicked-looking cat I never saw. Somebody else looked quite virtuous by the side of her".[1] . . . But it is idle to linger over these dubieties. If any one's story is veracious, it is Lady Byron's. She was remarkable for her truthfulness and accuracy: that could not be said, in even a modified degree, of either Byron or Caroline Lamb.

Byron's position on the Committee of Management of Drury Lane Theatre was another thorn. Augusta Leigh, who stayed at Piccadilly Terrace from April to June, wrote to Hobhouse: "At first it struck me as a good thing, employment being desirable, but as in other good things, one may discover objections". It was one of the great subjects of scandal in later days.

[1] Jeaffreson, Letter to Augusta, Appendix, p. 474.

. . . In August, Annabella wrote to tell Augusta how lovingly her brother had been talking of her, and how he had made a will in her and her children's favour. She also spoke with pleasure of his consideration for Lady Noel. "He said he meant to have her at Seaham (not that I should like it) during my accouchement, because she would be so anxious at a distance"; and concluded: "I am as apt to fancy that the sort of things which please me are to be traced more or less to you, as that those which pain me come from another quarter—and I always feel as if I had more *reasons* to love you than I can exactly know".[1]

Thus, to go by their own letters and the observations of their friends, did matters stand in August 1815. The marriage, so far, seems no unhappier than many. If he was "difficult", she was patient; if she was jealous and a little censorious, she seemed content to display both demerits to her sister-in-law alone. He was at work: *The Siege of Corinth* and *Parisina* were sent to Murray in November and December, both MSS. being in Lady Byron's writing; their financial position was discomfortable, and his temper suffered sadly, but many a marriage has rallied from such blows. . . . Between August and October, though, a dire change declared itself. Annabella entered his study one day during that period, and found him standing before the fire musing on his troubles.

"Byron, am I in your way?" she asked.

"Damnably", he answered. . . . He told Medwin that he was sorry afterwards—but did he tell her? Jeaffreson admits that he said many things "far more brutal and inexcusable than this"; at other times, "sulking and scowling . . . he maintained an insulting and exasperating taciturnity . . . for days together".

[1] Jeaffreson, Appendix, p. 475.

One day, in a fit of wrath, he threw a favourite watch on the hearth and smashed it to pieces with the poker. This and other ebullitions are accounted for by Jeaffreson in these words: "Byron was at this time . . . a laudanum-drinker". He *was*, as is clear from one of Lady Byron's letters to Augusta at the time of the separation; but not all laudanum-drinkers behave like that. Another reason given by Jeaffreson for his "maniacal conduct" was the coming-on of an attack of jaundice. He was assuredly in bitter mental and physical distress; but it is not wonderful that the young wife—suffering in her own way, be it remembered—should have attributed such outbursts to incipient mania. And apart from these active cruelties, there was the vaguer one of utter neglect—by no means the least painful to a woman. Possibly there is none which has murdered so much wifely affection. Every one knows of his ridiculous whim that "he could not bear to see a woman eat". It is easy for us to laugh at it; but his wife, who breakfasted, lunched, and dined alone, in her inevitably depressed condition, can scarcely have found it amusing. Day after day she spent like this—or if he did come in, he never looked at her, far less cheered her by any pleasant talk. . . . "Small things", say Harness and Hobhouse; but of such small things hell may be made —a woman's hell nearly always is made.

On December 10, 1815, the baby was born—a daughter. She was christened[1] Augusta Ada—"the

[1] Lord Lovelace states that Ada was not *christened* until November 1, 1816. The names of Augusta Ada were given at the baptismal registration, which took place while Lady Byron was still confined to her room. The christening, in those days, was often deferred till long after the baptismal registration. Augusta was to have been godmother; but at the ceremony Lady Noel and Lady Tamworth were the godmothers. The change was not announced to Augusta, but she heard of it and wrote to inquire. Lady Byron apparently did not answer (*Astarte*, p. 164).

second", wrote Byron to Moore, "a very antique family name; I believe not used since the reign of King John". The first was in honour of Mrs. Leigh, who was with Lady Byron during her confinement. That took place at 13 Piccadilly Terrace, not at Seaham, as had been at first planned. It was three days after the anniversary of his marriage that Byron wrote to Moore announcing "my papa-ship". He was in very low spirits: "Just at present, I am absorbed in 500 contradictory contemplations, though with but one object in view—which will probably end in nothing, as most things we wish do. But never mind —as somebody says, 'for the blue sky bends over all'.[1] I only could be glad if it bent over me where it is a little bluer".

Moore was struck by the melancholy tone and the longing for "blue sky", which he had found to be an invariable sign of that "restless and roving spirit which unhappiness or impatience always called up". He answered in this sense, and added, "I long to be near you that I might know how you really look and feel. . . . But only do tell me you are happier than that letter has led me to fear, and I shall be satisfied".

"That letter" was written on January 5, 1816. Bailiffs were in the house at Piccadilly Terrace, and other claims were pouring in by every post. The next day, January 6, Byron sent a note—a very unpleasing note[2]—to his wife, requesting her to leave home with her child as soon as it was possible for her to do so, and go to her parents at Kirkby Mallory. She was to fix the date herself, but it had better be soon, for he wished to break up his establishment. "He did not conceal", says Hobhouse,[3] "from himself or friends that her

[1] Coleridge, *Christabel*.
[2] See *Astarte*, p. 135.
[3] Lord Broughton, *Recollections of a Long Life*, ii. 215.

ladyship had been much offended by this note". She replied in writing on January 7: "I shall obey your wishes, and fix the earliest day that circumstances will admit for leaving London"; but on some other day, "an altercation ensued of very short duration". In the end, she "declared herself satisfied", fixed the date of her departure, and they "lived on conjugal terms up to the last moment".[1]

But it is evident, from Lady Byron's other actions on receiving her husband's note, that his discourteous treatment had rankled more deeply than Hobhouse gives us to understand. She consulted Dr. Baillie on January 8 on the question of Byron's sanity, and on the 9th requested John Hanson to see her "at twelve that morning". The brutality which had long been Byron's habitual manner towards her had (as she told Lady Anne Barnard) persisted and even increased during the hours of her confinement. He had caused her to be told, directly it was over, that her mother was dead; he had asked her, in the first instant of seeing her after the event, "if the child was not born dead";[2] and when he first looked at the baby in the cradle, had exclaimed, "Oh, what an implement of torture have I received in thee!" . . . That she refused to see him after these incidents may have been the reason for his writing to ask her to leave his house; but even if we so far hold her accountable for that additional harshness, it does not provide Byron with a very sympathetic excuse.

Dr. Baillie, consulted on the 8th, thought that "her absence might be advisable as an experiment"; but he

[1] Broughton, *Recollections*, pp. 215–16.

[2] When Byron's friends asked him if this horrible tale were true, he answered, "*She* will not say so, though, God knows, poor thing! it seems now she would say anything; but no—she would not say that" (Broughton, ii. 280).

had not seen Byron, and could only assume "the fact of mental derangement". Lady Byron, he said, was to avoid all but light and soothing topics in her correspondence with her husband after she left London. . . . On January 15, 1816, accordingly, she departed for Kirkby Mallory. The day after, Byron received from Woburn an affectionate note, and after her arrival at Kirkby she wrote the famous letter beginning "Dearest Duck". It is dated January 16,[1] and contains the following passage: "If I were not always looking about for B——, I should be a great deal better already for country air . . .— Ever thy most loving

"Pippin . . . Pip . . . Ip"

The next direct communication received by Byron from Kirkby was, on February 2, a letter from Sir Ralph Milbanke informing him that Lady Byron's parents "could not feel themselves justified in permitting her return" to his house. He was called upon to provide "a professional friend" to confer with "a person of the same description provided by me, that they may discuss and settle such terms of separation as may be mutually approved". Byron was confounded. He turned instinctively to the letter of January 16—the "Dearest Duck" letter. He had not answered it—Augusta had been his channel of communication with Kirkby Mallory—but his silence could scarcely be the reason for this resolve. Yet nothing had passed between him and Annabella since that affectionate note was written. What, then, had been happening at Kirkby?

Annabella had arrived on the night of the 16th, and her looks had shocked her parents. Pale and thin, harassed, dejected . . . Sir Ralph and Lady Noel could

[1] Broughton, *Recollections*, ii. 202–3.

not conceal their distress; and before she went to bed that night, she had been induced by their anxiety to lay before them—*not*, as Jeaffreson affirms, "all without a single reserve", but the particular question of her husband's sanity. That night too she wrote not only the "Dearest Duck" letter, but also a long one to Augusta, in which she says that she has made "the most explicit statement to my father and mother, and nothing can exceed their tender anxiety to do everything for the sufferer. . . . [They] agree that in every point of view it would be best for B. to come here. They say he shall be considered in everything, and that it will be impossible for him to offend or disconcert them after the knowledge of this unhappy cause. . . . Has Le Mann[1] advised the country? *It will be by means of the heir that it can be effected*". In conclusion: "My Mother suggests what would be more expedient about the Laudanum bottle than taking away. To fill it with three-quarters of water, which won't make any observable difference, or, if it should, the brown might easily be made deeper coloured".[2]

On the 17th Lady Noel wrote cordially to Byron, inviting him to Kirkby. He had promised to stay there before he went abroad—"the promise", says Jeaffreson, "being accompanied with a very remarkable and important statement of the poet's main purpose in determining to join his wife in Leicestershire, and to stay with her there for some weeks". The purpose was, in plain words—and plainly stated in Lady Byron's letters to Augusta from Kirkby—to "remain with her until she should be in the first stage of another progress

[1] Mr. Le Mann was the medical man who had attended Lady Byron during her confinement, and whom she was now employing to investigate her husband's mental condition, under pretext of attending him for his chronic disease of the liver.

[2] Jeaffreson, App. 475–6.

to maternity"; for the birth of a daughter had of course been a disappointment.

But on the morning of January 18, what news arrived at Kirkby Mallory from London—news that "troubled Annabella"?[1] It was the news (probably from Le Mann) that her husband was *not* to be considered insane.

Here seems the best place to insert her *Remarks on Mr. Moore's Life of Lord Byron*, with Moore's comment: "While these sheets" (of volume ii.; volume i. ended with the account of the separation) "were passing through the press, a printed statement has been transmitted to me by Lady Noel Byron".[2]

"I have disregarded various publications in which facts within my own knowledge have been grossly misrepresented; but I am called upon to notice some of the erroneous statements proceeding from one who claims to be considered as Lord Byron's confidential and authorised friend. Domestic details ought not to be intruded on the public attention: if, however, they *are* so intruded, the persons affected by them have a right to refute injurious charges. Mr. Moore has promulgated his own impressions of private events in which I was most nearly concerned, as if he possessed a competent knowledge of the subject. Having survived Lord Byron, I feel increased reluctance to advert to any circumstances connected with the period of my marriage; nor is it now my intention to disclose them, further than may be indispensably requisite for the end I have in view.

"Self-vindication is not the motive which actuates me to make this appeal, and the spirit of accusation is

[1] Jeaffreson, p. 199.

[2] Moore, p. 461. Moore inserted Lady Byron's Remarks as an appendix. It was also privately circulated by her, printed as a pamphlet of fifteen pages.

unmingled with it; but when the conduct of my parents is brought forward in a disgraceful light, by the passages selected from Lord Byron's letters, and by the remarks of his biographer, I feel bound to justify their characters from imputations which I *know* to be false. The passages from Lord Byron's letters, to which I refer, are the aspersion on my mother's character:[1]—'My child is very well, and flourishing, I hear; but I must see also. I feel no disposition to resign it to the *contagion of its grandmother's society*'. The assertion of her dishonourable conduct in employing a spy, 'a Mrs. C. (now a kind of housekeeper and *spy of Lady N.'s*), who, in her better days, was a washerwoman, is supposed to be—by the learned—very much the occult cause of our domestic discrepancies'. The seeming exculpation of myself with the words immediately following it,—'Her nearest relatives are a ——;' where the blank clearly implies something too offensive for publication. These passages tend to throw suspicion on my parents, and give reason to ascribe the separation either to their direct agency, or to that of 'officious spies' employed by them.

"From the following part of the narrative, it must also be inferred that an undue influence was exercised by them for the accomplishment of this purpose. . . . '[Lady Byron] had left London at the latter end of January, on a visit to her father's house, in Leicestershire, and Lord Byron was in a short time to follow her. They had parted in the utmost kindness,—she wrote him a letter full of playfulness and affection, on the road; and immediately on her arrival at Kirkby Mallory, her father wrote to acquaint Lord Byron that she would return to him no more'. In my observations upon this statement,

[1] In each quotation, she gave the page-reference; but this is useless here since I have used a different edition of Moore.

I shall, as far as possible, avoid touching on any matters relating personally to Lord Byron and myself.[1]

. . . . . .

"It has been argued, that I parted from Lord Byron in perfect harmony; that feelings, incompatible with any deep sense of injury, had dictated the letter which I addressed to him; and that my sentiments must have been changed by persuasion and interference, when I was under the roof of my parents. These assertions and inferences are wholly destitute of foundation. When I arrived at Kirkby Mallory, my parents were unacquainted with the existence of any causes likely to destroy my prospects of happiness; and when I communicated to them the opinion which had been formed concerning Lord Byron's state of mind, they were most anxious to promote his restoration by every means in their power. They assured those relations who were with him in London, that 'they would devote their whole care and attention to the alleviation of his malady', and hoped to make the best arrangements for his comfort, if he could be induced to visit them. With these intentions, my mother wrote on the 17th to Lord Byron, inviting him to Kirkby Mallory. She had always treated him with an affectionate consideration and indulgence, which extended to every little peculiarity of his feelings. Never did an irritating word escape her lips in her whole intercourse with him.

"The accounts given me after I left Lord Byron by the persons in constant intercourse with him, added to those doubts which had before transiently occurred to my mind, as to the reality of the alleged disease, and the reports of his medical attendant, were far from establishing the existence of anything like lunacy. Under this uncertainty, I deemed it right to communicate

[1] An omission here consists of matter already stated in my text.

to my parents, that if I were to consider Lord Byron's past conduct as that of a person of sound mind, nothing could induce me to return to him. It therefore appeared expedient, both to them and myself, to consult the ablest advisers. For that object, and also to obtain still further information respecting the appearances which seemed to indicate mental derangement, my mother determined to go to London. She was empowered by me to take legal opinions on a written statement of mine, though I had then reasons for reserving a part of the case from the knowledge even of my father and mother.

"Being convinced by the result of these inquiries, and by the tenor of Lord Byron's proceedings, that the notion of insanity was an illusion, I no longer hesitated to authorise such measures as were necessary, in order to secure me from being ever again placed in his power. Conformably with this resolution, my father wrote to him on the 2nd of February, to propose an amicable separation. Lord Byron at first rejected this proposal; but when it was distinctly notified to him, that if he persisted in his refusal, recourse must be had to legal measures, he agreed to sign a deed of separation. Upon applying to Dr. Lushington, who was intimately acquainted with all the circumstances, to state in writing what he recollected upon this subject, I received from him the following letter, by which it will be manifest that my mother cannot have been actuated by any hostile or ungenerous motives towards Lord Byron :—

"'My dear Lady Byron,—I can rely upon the accuracy of my memory for the following statement. I was originally consulted by Lady Noel on your behalf, whilst you were in the country; the circumstances detailed by her were such as justified a separation, but they were not of that aggravated description as to render

such a measure indispensable. On Lady Noel's representation, I deemed a reconciliation with Lord Byron practicable, and felt most sincerely a wish to aid in effecting it. There was not on Lady Noel's part any exaggeration of the facts; nor, so far as I could perceive, any determination to prevent a return to Lord Byron: certainly none was expressed when I spoke of a reconciliation. When you came to town in about a fortnight,[1] or perhaps more, after my first interview with Lady Noel, I was, for the first time, informed by you of facts utterly unknown, as I have no doubt, to Sir Ralph and Lady Noel. On receiving this additional information, my opinion was entirely changed: I considered a reconciliation impossible. I declared my opinion, and added, that if such an idea should be entertained, I could not, either professionally or otherwise, take any part towards effecting it.—Believe me, very faithfully yours,

"'STEPH. LUSHINGTON

"'GREAT GEORGE-STREET, *Jan.* 31, 1830'

"I have only to observe, that if the statements on which my legal advisers (the late Sir Samuel Romilly and Dr. Lushington) formed their opinions were false, the responsibility and the odium should rest with *me only*. I trust that the facts which I have here briefly recapitulated will absolve my father and mother from all accusations with regard to the part they took in the separation between Lord Byron and myself. They neither originated, instigated, nor advised that separation; and they cannot be condemned for having afforded to their daughter the assistance and protection which she claimed. There is no other near relative to vindicate their memory from insult. I am therefore compelled to break the silence which I had hoped always to

[1] Lady Byron's interview with Lushington took place on February 22.

observe, and to solicit from the readers of Lord Byron's Life an impartial consideration of the testimony extorted from me.

"A. I. NOEL BYRON

"HANGER HILL, *Feb.* 19, 1830"

Immediately on receipt of Sir Ralph's letter of February 2, Byron directed Augusta to write to Annabella and ask if it had been sent by her desire. Augusta had known since January 25 that such a step was to be taken, but had been strictly enjoined to say nothing of it, "as it would be prejudicial to me and mine". She had also had interviews with Lady Noel during the visit to London, and had said that "announcing a separation to her brother might induce him, she believed, to put an end to his existence". To this Lady Noel had answered, "So much the better; it is not fit such men should live".[1] . . . Nevertheless, the sister now wrote as Byron directed, and was answered on February 3.[2]

"MY DEAREST AUGUSTA,—You are desired by your brother to ask if my father has my concurrence in proposing a separation. He has. It cannot be supposed that in my present distressing situation, I am capable of stating in a detailed manner the reasons which will not only justify this measure, but compel me to take it. . . . I will only recall to Lord Byron's mind his avowed and insurmountable aversion to the married state, and the desire and determination he has expressed ever since the commencement to free himself from that bondage,

[1] Broughton, *Recollections*, ii. 207.

[2] The following letter is cited in full by Jeaffreson (p. 216), and was published in 1869 by the *Quarterly Review*.

as finding it quite insupportable. . . . He has too painfully convinced me that all [my] attempts to contribute to his happiness were wholly useless, and most unwelcome to him. I enclose this letter to my father" (Sir Ralph was in London, at Mivart's Hotel), "wishing it to receive his sanction".

While Augusta was writing to Annabella, Byron was writing to Sir Ralph. His letter was, as Hobhouse says — and Hobhouse gives the full text[1] — "firm, though temperate; . . . fearless, but moderate"; and no one who has the opportunity of reading it can deny it any of these attributes. He declined to take any further step until he had his wife's "express sanction" of Sir Ralph's proceedings.

On the 3rd, before seeing this in the letter to Augusta, he wrote himself to Annabella, "asking in affectionate terms for an explanation of Sir Ralph's conduct".[2] No answer came to him; but Augusta heard next day: "I hope, my dear A., that you would on no account withhold from your brother the letter which I sent yesterday . . . particularly as one which I have received from himself to-day renders it still more important that he should know the contents of that addressed to you. I am, in haste, and not very well, etc.".[3] . . . But evidently Augusta did withhold it, for on February 5, after a meeting with Hobhouse, who found him "in an agitation which scarcely allowed him to speak", Byron wrote to his wife the following note:—

"DEAREST BELL,—No answer from you yet; but perhaps it is as well; only do recollect that all is at stake, the present, the future, and even the colouring of

[1] *Recollections*, ii. 211–3. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 216.
[3] *L. and J.* iii. App. to chap. xii. p. 303.

the past. My errors, or by whatever harsher name you choose to call them, you know; but I loved you, and will not part from you without your express and expressed refusal to return to, or receive me. Only say the word that you are still mine in your heart, and

"'Kate, I will buckler thee against a million'".

Hobhouse too sent a note, begging that he might be permitted to see her—an error in tact, but pardonable from him who had heard that speech as she drove away from Seaham on the wedding-day: *If I am not happy, it will be my own fault.* He recalled this to her; and, later in the same day, wrote a prolix letter of remonstrance. This was—unnoticed otherwise—sent to Dr. Lushington, and the note was answered freezingly. His offered visit, and "all discussion", were declined.

On the same day—February 7—Byron's letter too was answered. Here is the most pregnant passage: "After seriously and dispassionately reviewing the misery that I have experienced almost without an interval from the day of my marriage, I have finally determined on the measure of a separation. . . . It is unhappily your disposition to consider what you *have* as worthless —what you have *lost* as invaluable. But remember that you believed yourself most miserable when I was yours.

"Every expression of feeling, sincerely as it might be made, would here be misplaced.

"ANNE ISABELLA BYRON"

To make a long story short, her determination remained, so far as he was permitted directly to know, inflexible. Indirectly, he had reason for supposing her to be—as he

afterwards maintained she was—influenced, to the extent of being actually driven, by her parents and their satellite, Mrs. Clermont. Her maid was now Mrs. Fletcher, the wife of the renowned valet. From Mrs. Fletcher had come to her husband a letter saying that Lady Byron was in "distress and agony"; that "she was rolling on the floor in a paroxysm of grief at having *promised* to separate from Lord Byron" . . . and (to sum up in Hobhouse's words) that "her mind was perpetually in the balance between an adherence to what she had said, and a feeling for that which she really wished to do". This testimony was thought so important that it was reduced to a legal form, and Mrs. Fletcher made affidavit of the substance of what she had written to Fletcher.[1]

On February 11 and 13, Byron heard from his wife. He had written on the 8th, imploring her to see him "when and where you please—in whose presence you please. The interview shall pledge you to nothing, and I will say and do nothing to agitate either. It is torture to correspond thus". . . . Her answer of the 11th declined to see him. For all response to his more personal expressions, she said, "I have determined, *if possible*, not to indulge the language of feeling in addressing you, as it could only be injurious in our present relative situations. I wish that you had spared *me* by a similar conduct". On re-reading his letter, she however found "some allusions which she would not leave to be answered by others, because the explanation might be less disagreeable to him from herself". She wrote then again, on February 13, to "explain" (as we saw in her Remarks) her affectionate letters on the way to Kirkby. She concluded: "If for these reasons . . . I did not remonstrate at the time of leaving your house, you

[1] See *L. and J.* iii. App. to chap. xii. p 320.

cannot forget that I had before warned you, earnestly and affectionately, of the unhappy and irreparable consequences which must ensue from your conduct, both to yourself and me. That to those representations you had replied by a determination to be wicked, though it should break my heart. What, then, had I to expect? I cannot attribute your state of mind to any cause so much as to that total dereliction of principle, which *since* our marriage, you have professed and gloried in. . . . I have *consistently* fulfilled my duty as your wife; it was too dear to be resigned until it became hopeless. Now my resolution cannot be changed.

"A. I. Byron"[1]

Two days later, writing cordially—in a very different tone from what she used with Hobhouse—to Francis Hodgson who, on his side, had approached her with infinitely greater tact and delicacy,[2] she made this statement: "I may give you a general idea of what I have experienced by saying that he married me with the deepest determination of revenge, avowed on the day of my marriage, and executed with systematic and increasing cruelty which no affection could change. . . . My security depended on the total abandonment of every moral and religious principle, against which . . . his hatred and endeavours were uniformly directed. The circumstances, which are of too convincing a nature, shall not be generally known while Lord B. allows me to spare him. . . . He *does* know—too well—what he affects to inquire. I must add that Lord Byron had been fully, earnestly, and affectionately warned of the unhappy consequences of his conduct".[3]

[1] Published in *Athenæum*, 1883, and by Jeaffreson.
[2] See his letter in *Memoir of Rev. F. Hodgson*, ii. 24–27.
[3] *Memoir of Rev. F. Hodgson*, ii. 28–30.

Hodgson wrote again (his second letter has been lost), and she again answered, "I believe the nature of Lord B.'s *mind* to be most benevolent; but there may have been circumstances . . . which would render an original tenderness of conscience the motive of desperation, even guilt, when self-esteem had been forfeited too far. . . . I entrust this to you under the most absolute secrecy".[1]

Byron persistently refused to assent to an amicable separation, and maintained that he had not been told with what he was charged. "In the meantime", he wrote to her, "I hope your ears are gratified by the general rumours". Hanson, his solicitor, calling on Sir Ralph and on Dr. Lushington, was refused explanation. "Oh", said Lushington, "we are not going to let you into the forte of our case". . . . Byron then altered his attitude. Indignant, and apparently resolute, he demanded the publicity with which Sir Ralph Noel had originally threatened *him*. On February 21 Hanson communicated to Sir Ralph his client's positive refusal to "separate by consent". "From that moment", says Hobhouse's statement (written, though not until comparatively recently published, in 1816), "every effort was made to conciliate him into acquiescence in an amicable arrangement". Lord Holland was induced to intervene, and Byron consented to see him. His mission was not only verbal: he was entrusted with a written proposition of specific terms of separation. The document is given in full in *Letters and Journals*, iii. 319; but Hobhouse's *précis* is sufficient for our purpose. It will be remembered that Miss Milbanke came to Byron with a fortune of £1000 per annum, of which he resigned her £300 as pin-money, retaining £700 for himself. It was now

[1] *Memoir of Rev. F. Hodgson*, ii. 30–33.

proposed that out of this thousand a year, five hundred should be resigned to her and that he should sign an instrument giving up half the Wentworth property (to which Annabella succeeded on her mother's death) to his wife. But unfortunately the proposal was thus drawn up:

"Under this arrangement Lord B. will claim immediately a pecuniary profit of £500 per an. in consequence of his marriage with Lady B. and be relieved of all expense of maintaining her.

"At the death of Lady Noel he will be benefited to the extent of from £3500 to £4000 per an."

Byron was overwhelmed with anger at the wording of these clauses. Beyond question they are insulting in effect, though not in intention. He rejected the terms at once; but he was to learn that his wife had herself drawn up the proposal. In her letter to him, acknowledging this (she was "not less surprised than hurt" that he was not satisfied), she urges her personal desire for the separation. "After your repeated assertions that when convinced my conduct has not been influenced by others, you should not oppose my wishes, I am yet disposed to hope that these assertions will be realised".

To make, again, a long narrative as short as may be, let it be stated that after legal and personal *tracasseries* of every kind; after every friend—Hobhouse, Hodgson, Lord Holland, Lady Melbourne—had in vain interceded; and after Lady Byron had, under pressure, signed a disavowal (which disappeared, *and was never repeated*, after the breakdown at one attempt at intervention) of the worst reasons that rumour had assigned for her resolution, Byron—who could, by bringing a suit for restitution of conjugal rights, have extorted the "specific charge" which he complained of never having

been able to extort—yielded, and on Sunday, April 21, 1816, signed the deed of amicable separation, husband and wife having not once met during the whole course of the proceedings.

END OF VOL. I.

Printed by Morrison & Gibb Limited, *Edinburgh*

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Mayne, Ethel Colburn
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